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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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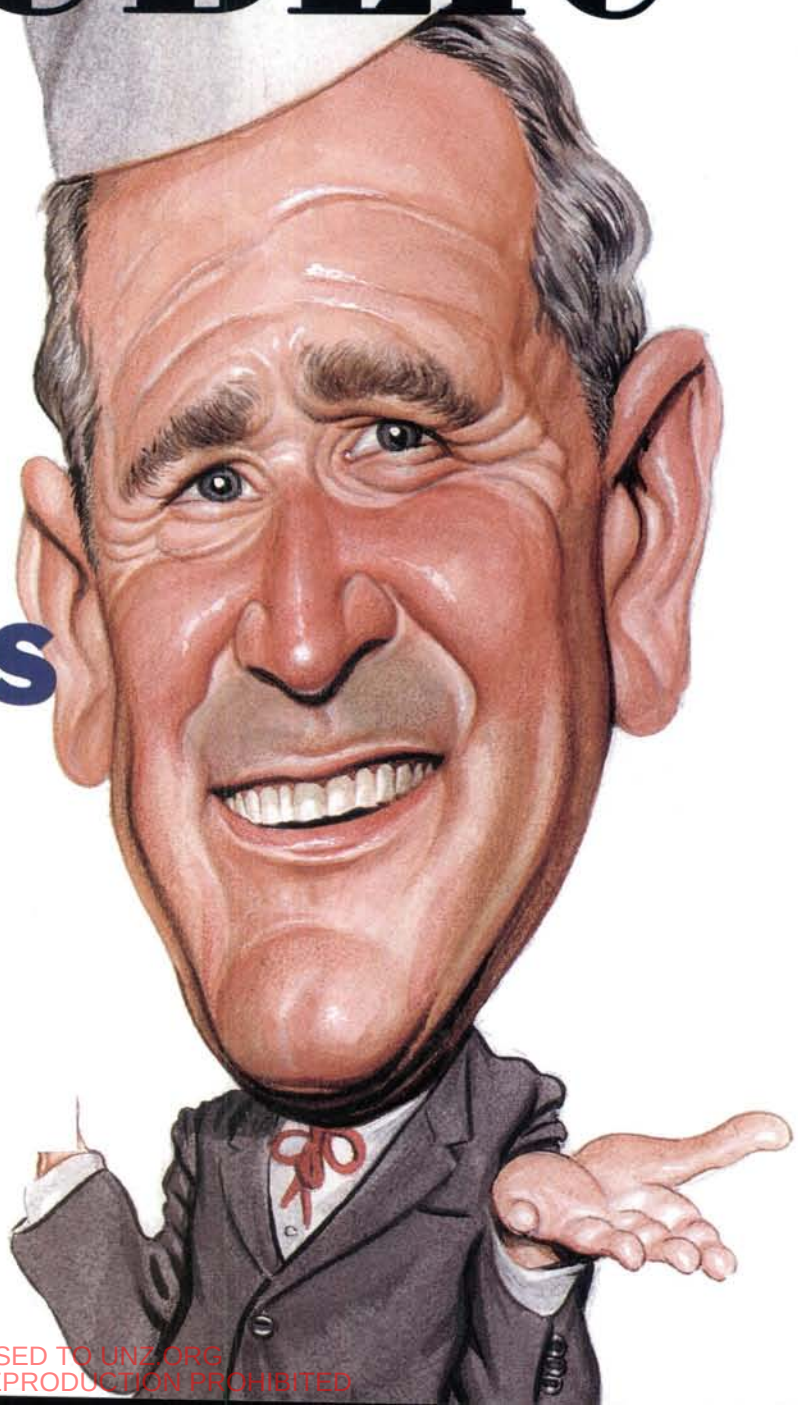
Why America Loves Stupid Candidates

JONATHAN CHAIT

ANDREW SULLIVAN



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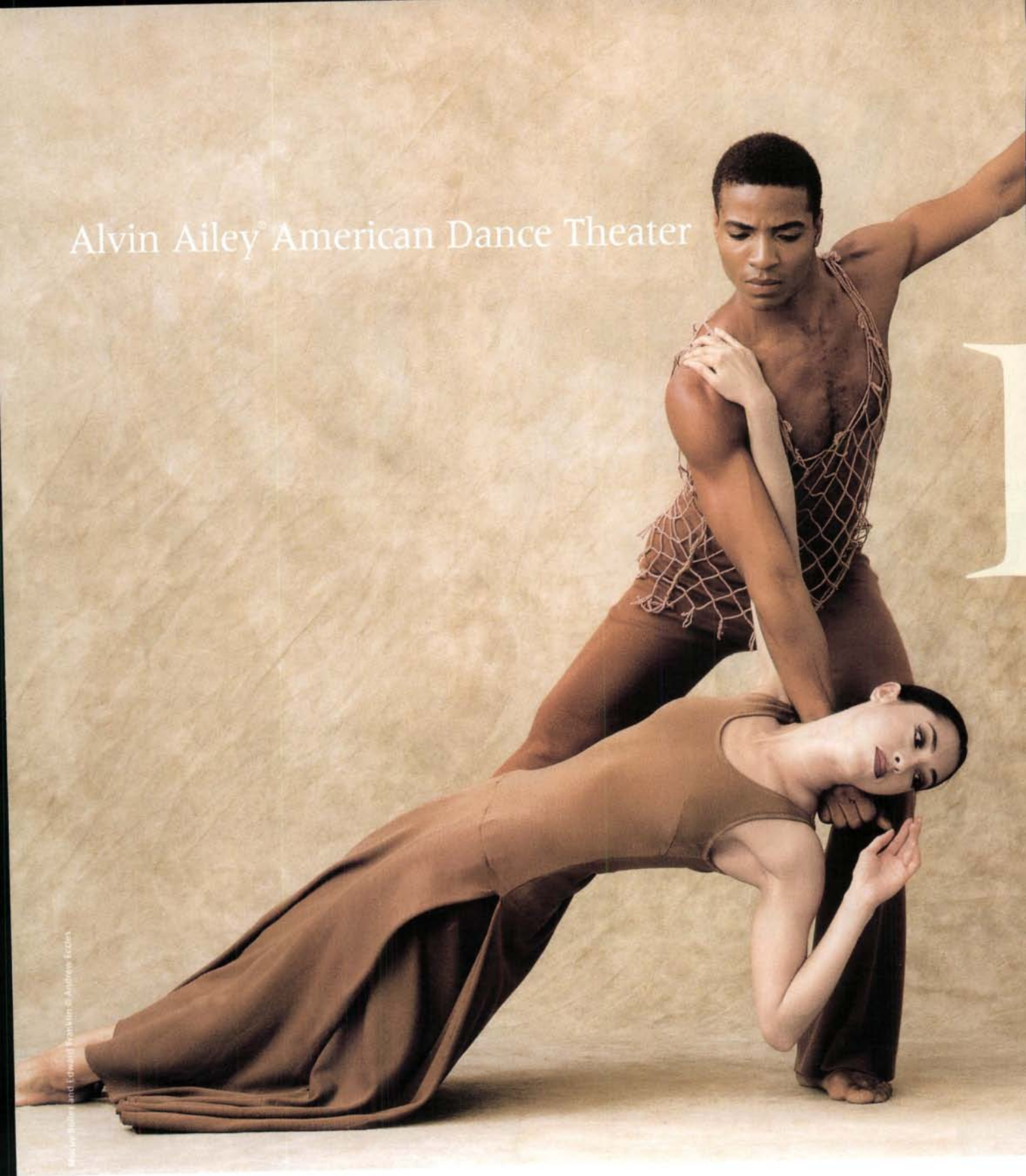

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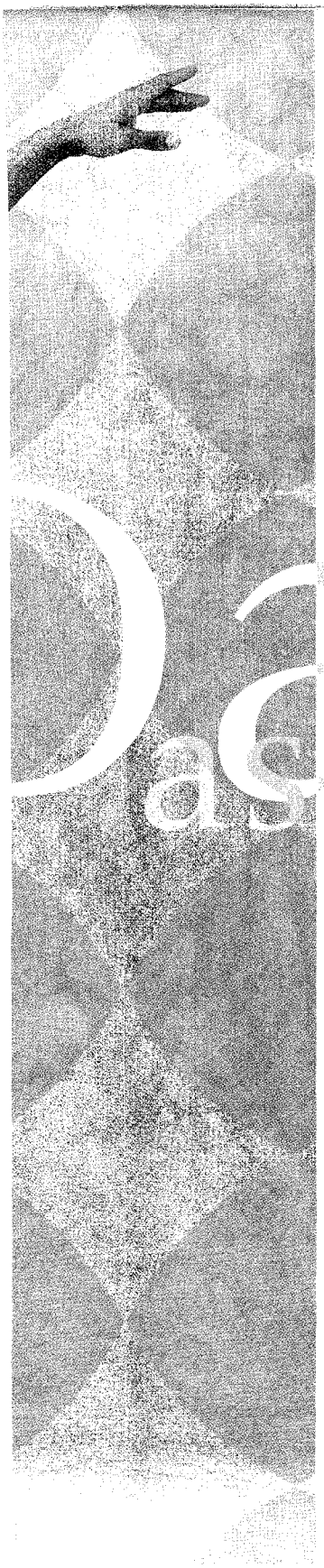

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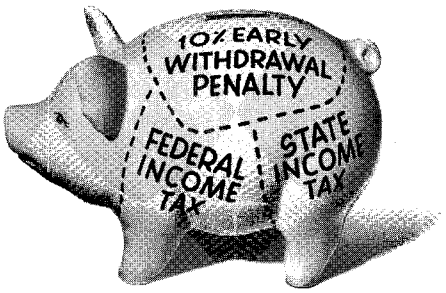

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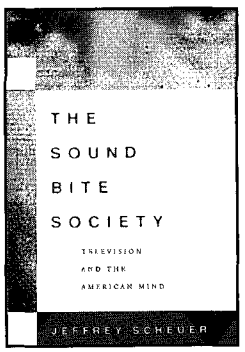

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 20, 1999
ISSUE 4,431

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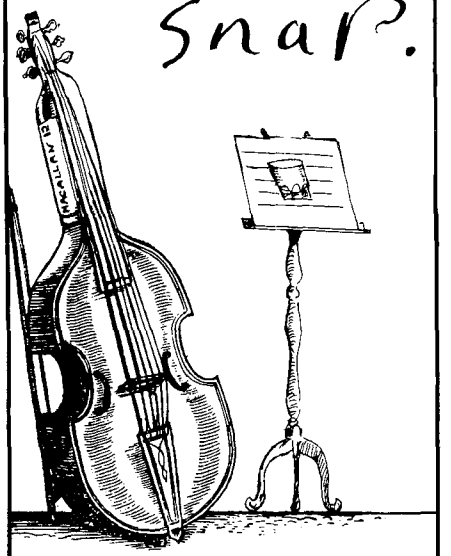
Scotch Snap.



A manuscript from a Conservatoire of Music

Sirs, it may have come to your notice that in music we have a term '*Scotch Snap*'. This usually takes the form of a semiquaver followed by a dotted quaver, a device favoured particularly by baroque composers such as Handel giving a distinctive 'jerky' character to a dance tune.

It has been suggested in the Professors' Common Room that this figure derived its name from the rough liquors of the time which imparted *a sudden jolt to the Scottish tastebuds.*

Today, of course, we have The Macallan Single Highland Malt Whisky, which provides such a delectable legato that the *Scotch* snap has become quite forgotten – except of course in those bars where only baser spirits are jiggered out (in which case, may we suggest a *bar's rest?*).

Yours etc., Ian Curror,
FRCO (CHM), GRSM, ARCM, LRAM *and BAR.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

Money matters

TO THE EDITORS:

John Mueller's conclusion that inequality of influence is endemic to democracy is too facile and shortchanges campaign finance reformers ("Well Off," November 15). Mueller points out that special interest representation is "the whole point" of democracy and that "democracy is fundamentally a system in which people are (equally) free to become politically unequal." His theory sounds good, but it is not pragmatic. We are not equally free when capitalism and democracy coexist. Most people are born into their political inequality, and a variety of factors inhibit their movement from that position. Mueller calls this apathy; others call it the mark of underrepresentation.

Big-money interests contribute to campaigns for reasons other than altruism. They give in order to buy representation of their interests (and to maintain the current political inequality). When these interests become protected and unchallenged—since legislators now depend on their support—alternative interests are terminally supplanted. Reform is not merely a question of equality; it is about basic representation.

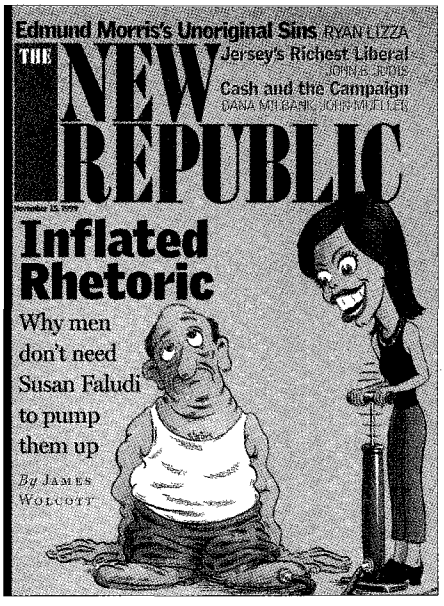
Independent expenditures, creative lawyers and scholars, and sluggish Federal Election Commission regulators will always attenuate reform efforts. But this does not imply that reform is futile. Instead, in Mueller's words, it creates "inconvenience" for special interests. For reformers, that is exactly the point.

MATTHEW C. FELLOWES
Georgetown Public Policy Institute
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

John Mueller makes a curious slip for a political scientist supposedly well-versed enough in campaign finance law to have written a book on the subject. He describes campaign finance reformers as fearful of the influence of "special interests" but then offers a variety of reasons why it's good that "people" exert their influence in the political arena. But the special interest groups that are of most concern to reformers are not individual persons or the political associations they make, but the corporations and unions that have long been deemed to lack the right to contribute directly to federal political campaigns.

Since early this century, contributions from corporations to candidates for federal office have been prohibited, since the only reason for such organizations to contribute is to buy influence. A corporation has only one goal: to maximize the value of the enterprise for the benefit of its shareholders. The fact that soft money contributions are not advertised by the firms that make them rules out the possibility that they are intended to buy corporate "goodwill" similar to that which companies obtain by sponsoring charitable causes.


Edmund Morris's Unoriginal Sins RYAN LIZZA
Jersey's Richest Liberal
JOHN B. JUDIS
Cash and the Campaign
DANA MILBANK, JOHN MILLER
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Inflated Rhetoric
Why men don't need Susan Faludi to pump them up
By JAMES WOLCOTT

The problem with soft money is that it allows corporations and unions to evade the restrictions that have wisely been placed upon their political participation. Simply prohibiting such contributions would go a long way toward stemming the most offensive abuses of the campaign finance system. At the same time, such restrictions would impinge on no one's political rights. But the failure to recognize the distinctions between the political rights of corporations and unions on one hand and individuals on the other—a failure Mueller displays in his article—will prevent even this modest reform from taking place.

JOSEPH P. FERRIE
Professor of Economics and
Director of Graduate Studies
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois

Corps politics

TO THE EDITORS:

As codirectors of the research project discussed in the November 15 TRB ("Green Line"), we appreciate Charles Lane's praise. We agree that civil-military relations should be discussed by those seeking the office of commander-in-chief. But we disagree with the implication that the decline of "nonpartisans" in the elite officer corps should by itself become a campaign issue.

Ole Holsti, a distinguished member of our project team, first documented the decline of officers identifying themselves politically as "independent," "no preference," or "other." We disagree with each other about how much this decline matters. But we agree that pandering to—or, perhaps more dangerously, seeking to dampen—the "military vote" would prove disastrous, subordinating military policy to institutional politics and undermining the confidence that both parties' leadership must have in the unbiased, professional advice of our senior military officers. We fear that some may interpret Lane's discussion of partisanship as doing precisely that by raising the prospect of putting the "military vote" in play.

In any case, we do not want Lane's focus to obscure our other findings, which included evidence of public estrangement from the military; the reversal of a trend of nearly 100 years whereby the percentage of veterans in Congress was higher than the comparable cohort in society, and the dramatic consequences of this shift in congressional representation on the propensity of the United States to use force (the fewer veterans in the U.S. political elite, the greater its tendency to use force); and the adherence of both the civilian and the military elite to the myth that the American people demand casualty-free combat in exchange for supporting the use of force abroad.

Finally, in explaining the political identity of the elite officer corps, our research team emphasized a factor Lane did not mention: the overwhelmingly antimilitary stance of the Democratic Party in the wake of the Vietnam War. Former Senator Gary Hart, upon reviewing our work, remarked, "Post-Vietnam, too many Democrats demonstrated too little concern for the traditional values that have sustained the military services. For that, shame on my party."

PETER D. FEAVER
Associate Professor of Political Science
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

RICHARD H. KOHN
Professor of History
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Triple Dutch

TO THE EDITORS:

Ryan Lizza misses an interesting point in his article "Double Dutch" (November 15) that would not escape anyone who had gone through the required Red Cross training for lifeguards during the first half

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of the century. Edmund Morris describes the rescue of his fictional self by the young Ronald Reagan as being in accordance with the accepted procedure at the time, which was called "prone pressure resuscitation." But in Daniel Voll's story about the rescue of the fictitious Roosevelt Haynes, which Lizza cites for its similarities to certain aspects of Morris's book, the narrator says that Reagan "puts his lips on mine, blows air into me." The life-saving technique used in Voll's story is anachronistic. The face-down "out goes the bad air, in comes the good" rhythm of Reagan's young adulthood was taught until the 1960s, when it was replaced for a few years by a system of lifting the victim by the shoulders from a back position, and then eventually by the familiar mouth-to-mouth technique.

Lizza comments that "both Voll and Morris describe Reagan's heroic rescue ... complete with the important metaphorical detail of Reagan literally blowing life into the two characters." The passages he quotes show them to be quite different, as indeed the metaphors should be; while prone pressure represents the Reagan years, mouth-to-mouth is pure Clinton.

JOHN A. PHILLIPS
Amherst, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITORS:
In "Double Dutch," Ryan Lizza quotes the fictive Edmund Morris's use of the Latin phrase *ironia ironorum*. Almost 70 years ago, I learned that the noun *ironia*, meaning irony, was feminine. "Ironorum" can't be the genitive plural of *ironia*, for that would be *ironiarum*. I suspect that the fictional Morris was so distracted by his schoolboy crush on Dutch that he loused up his Latin. *O tempora, O Morrisi*!

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

Bad medicine

TO THE EDITORS:
Certainly "there are trade-offs between cost and quality when it comes to medicine," as your editorial of November 15 states ("Doctoring the Truth"). Apparently this problem can't be resolved without "a patient-protection bill with teeth." But HMOs and insurance companies are not the place to start. The most lucrative part of the health care business is not running health plans but providing health services. Compare the profit margins of insurance companies like Aetna or Cigna with those of hospital chains or providers of specialized services like oncology or kidney dialysis. In order to obtain the desired trade-offs, we should begin with the providers. The problem is that, ever since the days of the Hillary Clinton health care plan, the Democrats have tried to cast insurance companies and HMOs as villains. Providers are far less subject to criticism because of the link between patients and their doctors. This point of view is politically popular and emotionally gratifying, but those who espouse it are barking up the wrong tree.

ED BRYNES
Boston, Massachusetts

Schoolyard fight

TO THE EDITORS:
We are writing in response to John B. Judis's Washington Diarist "Class Dismissed" (September 13 & 20). The John F. Kennedy High School Parents, Teachers, and Students Association (PTSA) understands that Judis's article reflects his personal opinion, but we feel that the publication of the article has polarized our community.

Judis made statements in his article that were highly offensive to African Americans. Specifically, he characterizes some classes in our school as resembling "those in the worst D.C. schools." Judis did not describe what those conditions might be, and there was no indication in the article that he had cause for any direct comparison. At Kennedy, academics are valued. We invite Judis and anyone else to visit our classes and see for themselves.

Judis also stated that the Leadership Training Institute (LTI) was created to prevent the flight of "black male students." This is false. LTI was created to attract high-performing students from all races and backgrounds. It is a nationally recognized program of which the Kennedy community is justifiably proud.

A large portion of Judis's article reflects his personal opinion of the professional relationship between the principal of Kennedy High School, Dr. Sheila Dobbins, and Jeff Schultz, former director of LTI. Judis's public discussion of this personality conflict unfairly portrays our school in a negative way. This clash in no way reflects the atmosphere inside the doors of Kennedy High School.

Kennedy High School has many positive aspects, none of which Judis discussed in his article. Since Dobbins became principal three and a half years ago, the school has improved in many areas. The number of students taking advanced-placement classes has more than doubled. The dropout rate has decreased from 5.6 percent in 1996 to 0.8 percent currently. During her tenure, Dobbins has contended with the move from the original Kennedy building to a holding school for two years and then back to a completely modernized building. She has spent countless hours making this transition as smooth as possible. Above all, Dobbins genuinely cares about each and every one of our students.

The publication of this article has been a point of great contention in our community. Judis offers no real solutions. We are working on solutions. We encourage him to join the LTI Advisory Committee and the PTSA in helping us move forward together.

WILLIAM D. CHAPPELL
Co-President
John F. Kennedy High School Parents, Teachers, and Students Association
Silver Spring, Maryland

JOHN B. JUDIS REPLIES:
William D. Chappell's letter is a product of a bitter dispute that has broken out at my daughters' high school. The author, who is not African American, claims to represent the sentiments of African Americans. He represents at best a group of parents, allied with the principal, who have attempted to discredit her critics by imputing to them views that they claim are particularly offensive to African Americans. A fair-minded reader will find nothing of the sort in the Diarist I wrote. In it, I addressed the failings of two principals, neither of whom were identified by race. One (Dobbins) happens to be black and the other white. Dobbins's failings lay, ironically, in her attempt to undermine a program, the Leadership Training Institute, that was intended to encourage high-quality integrated education at Kennedy High. It was supposed to prevent "bright flight," including, as LTI's founders pointedly told me, that of ambitious black males. The program was supposed to expand from an honors program into a signature program for the entire school that would imbue the students with an ethic of community service and social responsibility. It worked for the initial students in it, but Dobbins, upon assuming the role of principal, blocked its expansion and forced out its gifted leader and founder.

Did I paint too dire a picture of Kennedy High School? Perhaps. There are some signs of improvement, but the school still ranks a dismal first in the county in its percentage of children failing in school—ahead of schools with similar percentages of low-income students—and its students' level of achievement, measured in standardized test scores, has actually declined in the past three years, at the same time that scores have been rising in the county and nationally. And, sad to say, the school has had some classes in which students don't attempt to learn and teachers have given up on trying to teach. I didn't dwell on these, and I won't now, because my purpose was not to show how bad a school Kennedy High was but how much better it could become. ■

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Ignoble

WHAT AN IDIOT I feel like, worrying about the demise of the House of Lords. The British certainly don't seem to be worrying about it: I was there in November, on the day that more than 500 hereditary peers were ordered down to Westminster to clean out their desks for the final time, and it didn't make the lead story on the BBC evening news. Even the peers themselves don't seem particularly concerned. When a reporter caught up with the newly displaced Duke of Devonshire, relaxing at home by the fire in a three-piece suit and bedroom slippers, the duke explained that the hereditary chamber had been an embarrassing vestige of elitism unworthy of a twenty-first-century democracy. He reminded me of a stuffy Groucho Marx, boasting that any legislative body foolish enough to grant him and his family a permanent seat was unworthy of his participation.

If the Duke of Devonshire doesn't care, why should I? I'm sure that if we decided to abolish the U.S. Senate, I wouldn't want self-important British columnists writing about how we were betraying the legacy of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. I'd suggest that they mind their own business.

What's more, most of the reasons I can think of for mourning the loss of the House of Lords aren't very convincing. For one thing, the upper chamber of Parliament isn't exactly going away; it's just getting an update. No longer will peers be able to inherit membership from their fathers. The 646 peers still serving on that basis as of this year were offered a chance to keep their seats by winning an election among their colleagues. Some 90 of them did, and they will be staying on. They'll be joined by the 567 nonhereditary "life peers"—men and women rewarded by the prime minister for distinguished achievement. When they die, their places will become vacant. Within a few years, the Blair government says, a new electoral system that will create a thoroughly modern upper chamber will be implemented.

Of course, if you are even moderately infected with the virus of traditionalism, as I am, you might object that 800 years of custom deserve a little more respect. After all, it was England's hereditary nobility that forced the Magna Carta upon King John in 1215, striking the first tiny blow for representative government in the Western world. A history so proud, it might be argued, shouldn't be tossed aside in a heedless moment of let's-get-with-it modernization.

But the British aren't exactly doing this on impulse. They've been struggling with the House of Lords problem since 1911, when the Lords lost their historic right to veto legislation passed by the House of Commons. Since then, the upper chamber has retained only the prerogative to propose amendments and delay enactment for up to a year. Blair is merely finishing a job begun close to a century ago.

So anyone who objects at this point isn't really defending a meaningful bicameral system. That died a long time ago. What he or she is defending is tradition for tradition's sake. And here Americans are on particularly shaky ground. Yes, it can be moving for Americans to visit Westminster, wander into the House of Lords, and reflect on the sheer staying power of an ancient institution whose history and lineage incorporate so much of the legacy of Western political freedom. But, in the end, it's Britain's affair. If a hereditary peerage isn't the kind of political symbol the Brits want to send the world in the twenty-first century, that's their prerogative.

There is, however, one legitimately troublesome issue that surrounds the decision to cashier the hereditary House of Lords. It lies in the naïve assumption that there's obviously a better way of designing a legislative body, and, now that the frumpy old peers are out of the way, doing so shouldn't be too difficult.

It does sound obvious at first. After all, what sense can it possibly make to maintain a bicameral legislature whose upper chamber consists of men sitting there because their remote ancestors were court favorites under Queen Anne? Of course there's a better system. Just one question: What is it?

Filling the upper chamber with life peers instead of hereditary ones isn't much of a solution. That point was underlined a few weeks ago, when Lord Jeffrey Archer, a writer of mediocre mystery novels and a life peer ennobled by John Major, was forced to abandon his campaign for mayor of London after it was revealed that he had asked a friend to lie in court about his affair with a prostitute. Personally, I'd rather be governed by the Duke of Devonshire. All you do by creating a chamber of life peers is shift the basis of membership from cronyism under the Hanoverians to cronyism under Thatcher, Major, and Blair.

How about making the peers elected? The Blair government has talked about replacing the old House of Lords with a new upper chamber chosen by majority vote and truly representative of the popular will. Nobody has yet figured out exactly what it will look like. It probably won't be modeled after the U.S. Senate, in which Alaska's 600,000 residents have the same representation as California's 32 million. That would be, after all, blatantly undemocratic—a bad way to start off the new millennium.

Perhaps it will look more like the U.S. House of Representatives, with every lord speaking for the same number of constituents. But, of course, Britain already has a legislative chamber somewhat like that. It's called the House of Commons.

The more you think about it, the more you realize that the whole point of having a House of Lords was to give lords something to do. Show up, give a speech, offer an amendment, render a legal decision—the job made honest public servants out of rich men who otherwise lacked any real means of paying the country back for their triumph in the birth lottery. Of late they weren't performing all that badly at it, either. Last year alone, they suggested 25 times the number of amendments that they passed 50 years ago.

Looked at this way, the Duke of Devonshire's magnanimity in the face of his dismissal from Parliament doesn't seem all that magnanimous at all. He isn't giving up his title, his land, his houses, or his fortune of 300 million pounds. He isn't even giving up his bedroom slippers. He's merely saying that if the country no longer requires public service in exchange for those privileges, that's all right with him.

From a distance of 3,000 miles, I'm beginning to wonder if the British haven't eliminated a venerable institution that served to justify the existence of a hereditary upper class and replaced it with one that is unlikely to find any real justification at all. That may not be a tragedy, but it certainly seems like a waste of time and effort.

Indeed, by the time the British finish arguing about the best way to create a streamlined, efficient upper chamber of Parliament for the twenty-first century, the mindlessly traditional one that lasted into the twentieth may not look so bad by comparison.

ALAN EHRENHALT

ALAN EHRENHALT is executive editor of *Governing* magazine.

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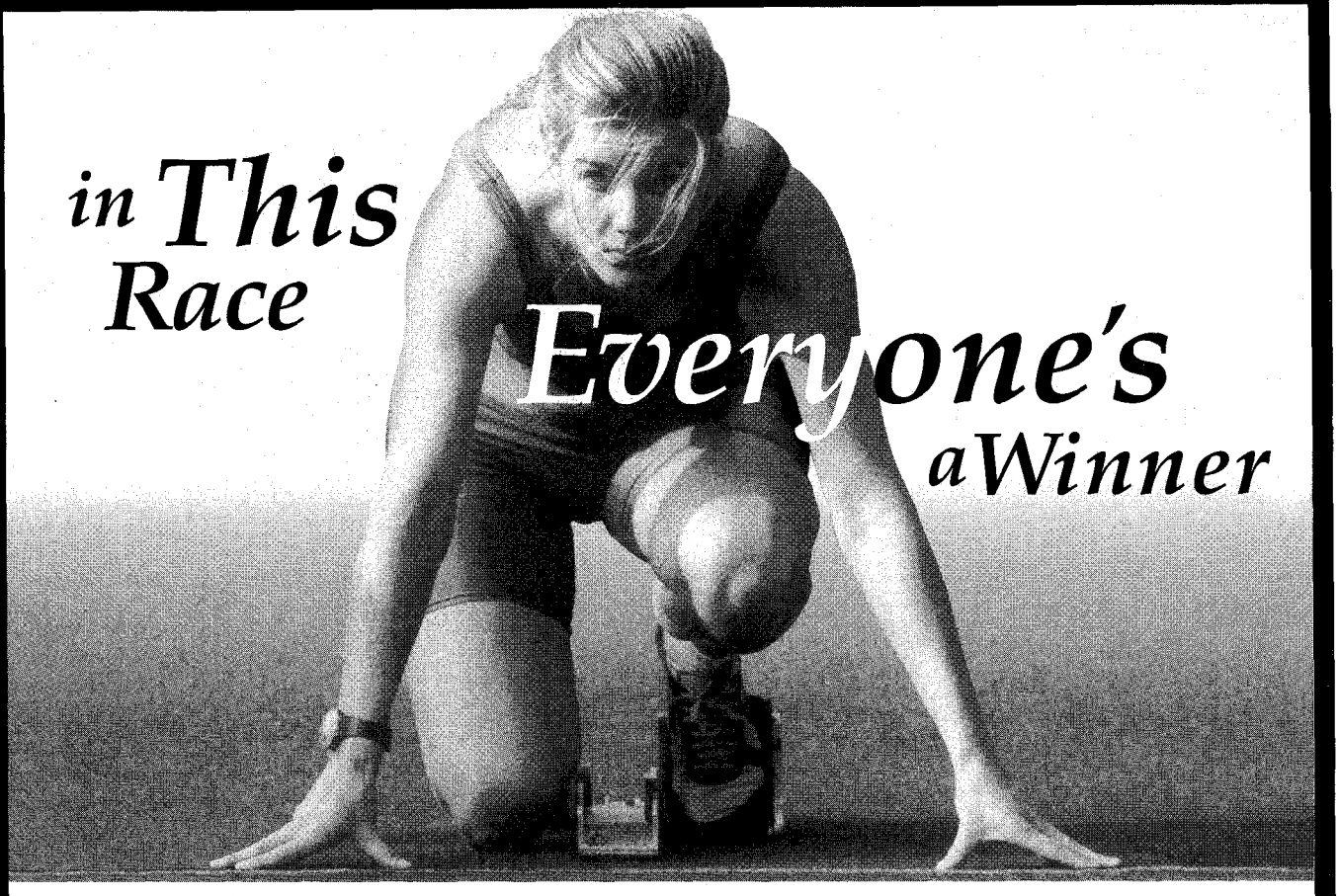

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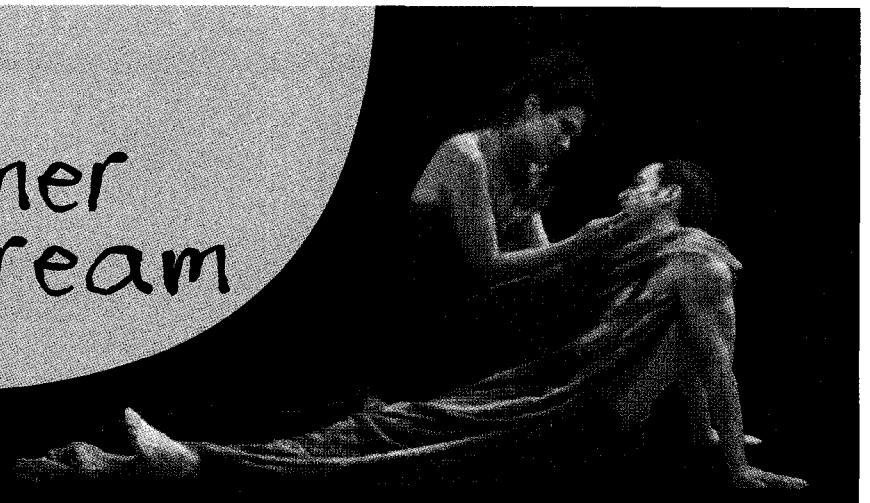

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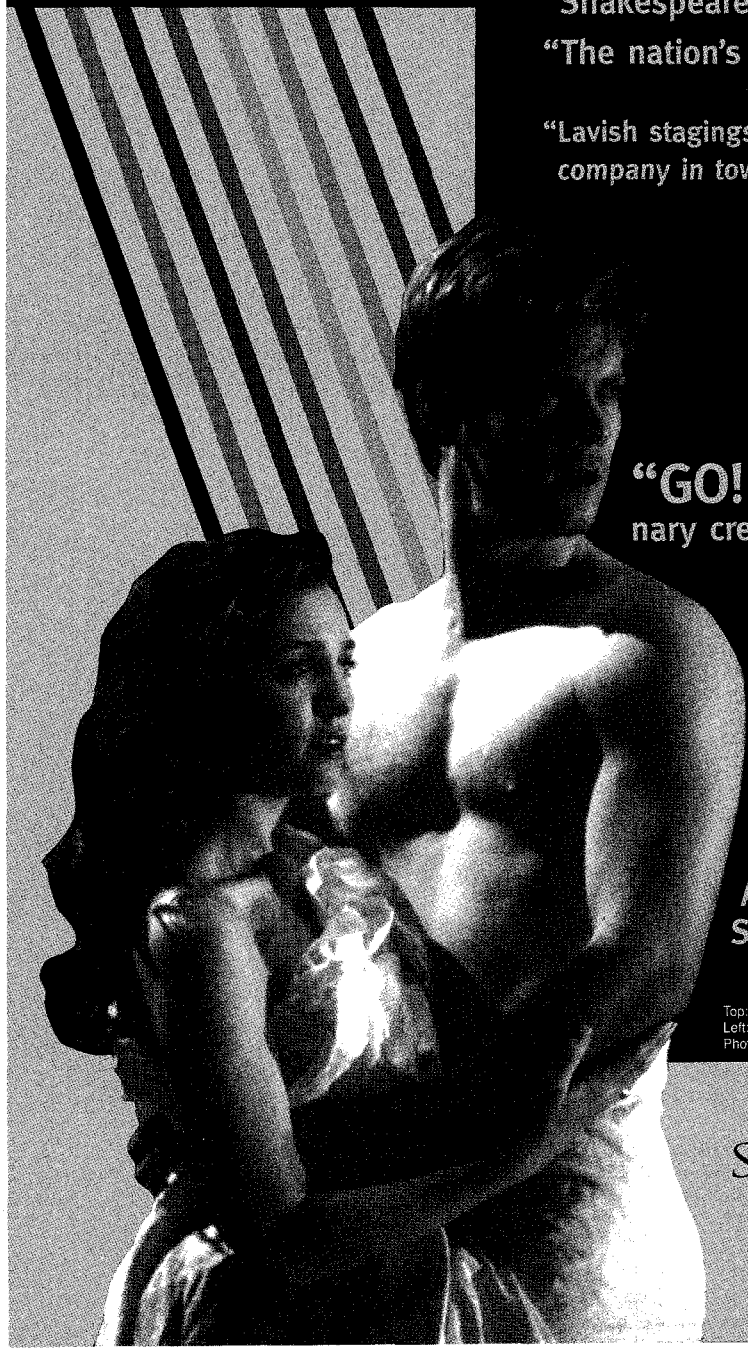

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Strange Justice

THE VERDICT IS a Rwandan newspaper dedicated to the gruesome job of monitoring justice in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide of the country's Tutsi minority. It carefully tracks the trials before Rwanda's overburdened courts, it runs updates on the U.N. war crimes tribunal for Rwanda, and it editorializes about points of due process. With the newspaper's earnest masthead slogan, "Justice is Dispensed in the Name of the People," its editors declare their confidence in the rule of law. After the horrors of 1994, when more than half a million people, including three-quarters of the Tutsi population, were murdered by Hutu extremists, it is amazing that they can have confidence in anything.

Least of all the international community. Not only did the world abandon Rwandans to die during the slaughter, but the tribunal the United Nations set up afterwards in Arusha, Tanzania, to prosecute the most prominent *génocidaires* is now actually hindering the process of bringing them to justice.

The latest outrage is the tribunal's dithering over the fate of Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, a founder of both a murderous Hutu Power group and the notorious anti-Tutsi radio station that helped incite the genocide. For these actions, Barayagwiza was indicted by the U.N. tribunal for genocide and crimes against humanity. When he was captured in Cameroon in March 1996 and finally shipped to Arusha in November 1997, he became one of the most notorious genocide suspects in U.N. custody. That is, until November 3, when the appeals court for the U.N. Rwanda tribunal ordered that he be set free because he had been detained at length in Cameroon without being charged and had languished in jail for too long without standing trial. Although Carla Del Ponte, the new U.N. chief prosecutor, is trying to persuade the appeals court to reconsider its decision, the Rwandan government remains furious. It has stopped cooperating with the court and is refusing even to let Del Ponte set foot in Rwanda to visit the tribunal's own prosecution office in Kigali, the nation's capital.

Given the United Nations' track record in the years since the genocide, Rwanda has a strong basis for its distrust. Having defeated the Hutu *génocidaires* after the 1994 slaughter, the new Tutsi-dominated Rwandan government wanted the international community to help catch the war criminals and then turn them over to Rwandan courts. Instead, the United Nations set up its own tribunal, which got the major suspects but—unlike at Nuremberg—did not even sit in the country it was judging. The Arusha court was also tacked on to the U.N. war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, with a single prosecutor for both tribunals and an appeals court that sits in splendid isolation in The Hague. The tribunal loftily refuses to impose the death penalty (in contrast to Rwanda), even though the Allies hanged the guilty at Nuremberg and Tokyo, and Israel did the same to Adolf Eichmann. And the tribunal, for years underfunded by a world that viewed its existence as a token gesture, has developed a reputation for incompetence and corruption. In 1997, an internal U.N. investigation found that "not a single administrative area functioned effectively" in the tribunal's administrative branch. The tribunal's biggest achievement has been that it has 38 high-profile suspects in custody, including former Rwandan Prime Minister Jean Kambanda, who pled guilty to genocide last year. But, if Barayagwiza walks free, even that success will be tainted.

To be sure, Rwanda's own brand of justice isn't much to brag about, either. Rwanda holds some 125,000 lower-level genocide suspects in squalid and overcrowded jails, and, with its fragile judiciary system shattered by the genocide, it has only managed to try a handful of them. The trials are often of the shotgun variety. Especially outside of Kigali, defendants have been tried without counsel. In April 1998, 22 convicts were publicly shot in front of cheering crowds in public stadiums—scaring many other suspects into confessing in hopes of being granted plea bargains.

But Rwanda's internal problems are no excuse for the international tribunal's behavior. Indeed, the dallying of the latter is partially responsible for the former. Anyone at the U.N. Security Council who wants to sanction Rwanda as punishment for Del Ponte's visa problem is making a big mistake. This crisis should be an opportunity to find ways to make Rwandans take the tribunal seriously. If Barayagwiza cannot be tried in Arusha, he could still be brought before the courts of another state (Belgium has already expressed interest) under the principle of universal jurisdiction for crimes against humanity. The United Nations—and America—could give more money not just to the Arusha tribunal but also to Rwanda's courts and to efforts to train Rwandan judges. The United Nations could appoint a prosecutor for the Rwanda tribunal alone, rather than having Del Ponte handle both Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia simultaneously. And the United Nations could remember, as it often has not, that justice means more than simply following legal procedures. To endure, it must also do something for the survivors. ■

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NOTEBOOK

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE: In 1996 Steve Forbes ran one of the meanest ad campaigns in recent political history. So last month, as Forbes prepared to air his ad war against George W. Bush, campaign-watchers waited with bated breath. What would the master of the politics of personal destruction come up with against a man who had purportedly participated in branding classmates with a red-hot clothes hanger in his youth? Well, something different: an ad criticizing Bush for *his* negative ads. "That's right," the Forbes spot said darkly. "Bush supporters are using massive corporate contributions to run [a] negative ad campaign to benefit George W. Bush. If George W. Bush really opposes negative ads, shouldn't he tell his supporters to stop attacking Steve Forbes?" There was only one problem: Bush hadn't actually run negative ads against Forbes. Bush supporters had merely run an ad with the message, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all," warning Forbes not to go on the attack as he had in 1996. So Forbes, rather ingeniously, crafted an attack ad decrying another attack ad that really wasn't an attack ad at all. As he so often has before, Forbes stands at the cutting edge of an odious trend in American politics: the negative ad disguised as a plea for positive campaigning. The Democrats have also gotten into the act, with Al Gore recently condemning Bill Bradley for an "improper" attack, as *The New York Times* put it, after Bradley criticized the vice president's campaign fund-raising practices. And last month GOP presidential hopeful Gary Bauer denounced Bush for conducting a whisper campaign against Senator John McCain—even though, as Fred Barnes spelled out in a recent *Weekly Standard* article, there's absolutely no evidence that Bush—much less anyone else—had actually conducted such a campaign. Never before have the plain old in-your-face politics of personal destruction looked so good.

1984: Remember when leftists fretted that they didn't have a standard-bearer in this year's Democratic primary? Well, lefties, fret no more. The Democratic race is fast deteriorating into a pander-fest of Mondale-esque proportions. Days after Bill Bradley secured the backing of Robert Reich, once the Clinton administration's resident liberal, Al Gore did him one better, nailing down the man who made "liberal" a naughty word in the first place: Michael Dukakis. We fear Gore's willingness to trot out the Duke means the vice president is taking the bad advice of his campaign manager, Donna Brazile. Brazile has been encouraging Gore to take a "constituency group" approach to the nomination, which means telling labor activists, feminists, minorities, environmentalists, gays, and the disabled only what they want to hear. Sure enough, Gore has pandered to women's groups—by objecting to the administration's deal on U.N. dues because of its abortion language. Following Bradley's lead, he's met with the demagogic Al Sharpton in New York. And last week Gore made it a hat trick—pandering to environmentalists by promising billions more for conservation. The centrist Democratic Leadership Council, the ideological architects of Clinton's victory, rightly argues in a recent newsletter that Gore's interest-group campaign smacks of Mondale and Dukakis. "His policies are reasonably New Democrat, but his campaign strategy is decidedly Old Democrat," DLC chief Al From grumbles to us. Let's hope his grumbles are heard.

LITTLE WHITE (HOUSE) LIES: To understand the culture of Clintonism, it's often best to focus on the small things. Consider the events of November 23 and 24, as Hillary and Bill Clinton maneuvered around the issue of whether or not they want the world to know that he is involved in her Senate campaign. Apparently Bill is for full disclosure (surprise) and Hillary is against it (not a surprise). How else to explain their divergent stories about Hillary's declaration that she is no longer "exploring" but now "intending" to run for the Senate? Her campaign pretended the November 23 announcement was a spontaneous response to a spontaneous question at a political forum (even though, hours earlier, the campaign had leaked to the press that the announcement would be made). Indeed, her decision was so spontaneous, Mrs. Clinton said, that she hadn't even told her husband she was running! When asked for Bill and Chelsea's reaction to her decision, she responded, "Well, they're in Kosovo, and they don't know about this." OK, never mind the fact that, earlier this year, Hillary confided to *Talk* magazine that she told Bill everything: "We talk. We talk in the solarium, in the bedroom, in the kitchen—it's just constant conversation." Evidently that conversation doesn't include topics such as what the first lady will be doing for the next six years of her life. But even more damning than Hillary's earlier interview with *Talk* was Bill's own statement on November 24, the day after his wife announced her intention to run. "What she said in public is what she's been telling me for weeks and weeks," the president told the press after a pardoning ceremony for a Thanksgiving turkey named Harry. "Even though, for a lot of good reasons, she thought she should wait till next year to make a formal announcement, I thought [announcing earlier] was a wise thing for her to do." So, is Bill involved in his wife's campaign or not? Gloria Borger of *U.S. News & World Report* provided some insight this week, reporting, "[Bill] Clinton is so involved that the couple have completely reversed roles: White House staffers once went to Hillary to get to Bill; now Hillary's staffers go to Bill to send messages to Hillary." Perhaps one of those staffers should tell the two to get their stories straight.

FUHGEDDABOUDIT: Oblivion isn't what it used to be. Like everything else in the exciting new world, it moves faster. Ten years are now the mists of time—or so we must conclude from "Cold War Without End," by Jacob Weisberg, which appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* on November 28. Weisberg is struck that "the cold war ... remains alive and bitter in American cultural and intellectual circles 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The collapse of the Soviet Empire might have been expected to lend a sense of perspective and even forgiveness to the subject of Communism." Now, we know—with a historiographical confidence that the great anti-Communists (liberal and conservative) of the

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1940s, '50s, '60s, and '70s could not have possessed—that the Communist regimes of the twentieth century were responsible for the murder of 85 million people. (That is the *low* estimate.) For those who defended and apologized for such systems, forgiveness? And surely "perspective" means nothing but a strict historiographical attitude to the study of all those regimes; but it is precisely for perspective that historians such as Ronald Radosh and Harvey Klehr (both contributors to these pages) are regularly tarred as cold warriors—as if there were dishonor in the epithet, and as if their scholarship were only an expression of politics. For Weisberg, however, the great debates about communism "are not primarily arguments about historical fact at all." No, they are about "unresolved feelings of personal betrayal and the Oedipal conflicts of red-diaper babies." It is also "about family in the larger sense of the family of American Jews." (From Weisberg's platitudinous account, you would not know that the politics of most of the Jews of the United States was dominated by the belief in America or the belief in Zion.) For Weisberg, the anti-Communists have nothing more to teach. "What happens when the political struggle that defined your existence ceases to exist?" he asks bathetically. But the struggle against communism was a struggle against modern tyranny. If Weisberg believes that modern tyranny is no more—that there is no significant difference between China and Belgium, or between North Korea and Costa Rica—he should say so. Instead he asks only that we lighten up and "approach the story of American communism in a less judgmental fashion." Reading this post-everything article, you wonder whether it is not the death of communism and anti-communism that we must ponder, but the death of conviction. So where do you want to go today?

SCENES FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE, CONT'D: Last week, in yet another scrumptious TV appearance, Donald Trump elaborated on his aversion to the seemingly innocuous social convention of shaking hands. "I think it's a very, very terrible custom," he told CNN's Wolf Blitzer. "[I]t's almost barbaric in a certain way, and especially nowadays." The Donald, it seems, has an absolute dread of the germy, unwashed masses—prompting more than one pundit to question how, as a presidential candidate, Trump would survive the requisite hours of flesh-pressing. Of course, this is the same Donald who cannot get through a public appearance without at least one mention of the countless hot babes he's "dated." Perhaps someone should warn our hygienically scrupulous boy of the myriad microbial risks associated with bed-hopping—especially nowadays. ■

VINT'S WEEK

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Seattle Dispatch

Means of Dissent

By CHARLES DUHIGG

THE EXTREME IDEOLOGICAL gulfs among the estimated 10,000 protesters at the World Trade Organization Ministerial in Seattle could almost be ignored when the protesters gathered for a "People's Assembly" on the first day of the conference. Ignored, that is, until people got hungry.

"Gimme some raw, dead meat!" shouted the aptly named Mike Crudes as he warily eyed the long line of dreadlocked youths waiting to buy Green Life Smoothies and Tofu Scrambles from the Light of Love Gypsy Village tent. "Meat is dead," a much-pierced youth retorted under his breath as he and a companion compared tattoos.

Welcome to the Battle for Seattle, 1999. When organizers decided to locate the WTO's "millennium round" here, they pointed to the city's spirit of free trade: one out of every three jobs in Washington state is affected by foreign trade, and the percentage is even higher in Seattle and its surrounding communities, home to Microsoft and Boeing. What the organizers didn't take into account was the spirit of Kurt Cobain.

"Look, don't get me wrong. I think those guys who marched around dressed up like turtles are probably fairies," said Crudes, a member of the AFL-CIO. "But, as long as they're against the same thing as me, I got no problem. I think this shows how bad the WTO is, that so many different people can protest together." (Actually, the turtles were mostly family men. The "fairies" were gathered across the field, alongside a group of lesbians carrying DYKE PRIDE placards.)

Indeed, nothing represents the reality of globalization today better than the uncomfortable bedfellows from more than 130 organizations and groups who joined forces in Seattle to protest it—and, ironically, to partake of its bounty. As militia members milled with black-clad anarchists and topless environmentalists ("I painted my breasts with a mural of the tree I lived in for a year"), and trade unionists marched under "FREE MUMIA!" posters, it was clear that American protest had entered uncharted territory.

"I'll be honest—I don't really know many people like the ones here," said Butch Razey, commander of the Yakima County Militia, who attended the protest on orders from superiors in Montana. "We're willing to die for our Constitution, and the patriots are all coming out because they know this is the beginning of world government. But I'll be honest—this will be the first time I'll be holding hands with a bunch of tree-huggers."

But the hand-holding didn't last long. While many of the groups protesting the WTO on behalf of the world's oppressed showed a strong commitment to nonviolence, a handful of protesters—who smashed storefront windows and spray-painted graffiti—did not. And even less interested in nonviolent protest were the oppressed themselves. As temperatures dropped throughout the course of the day and middle-aged activists returned to their homes and hotels, a handful of local youths from the poorer areas of Seattle—a few impoverished urbanites in a vast sea of dreadlocked college students—stopped by to take in the activity. And to loot the empty stores sitting amid broken glass and deactivated alarm systems.

Suddenly, the underclasses needed to be, well, oppressed. "This is a nonviolent protest!" one intrepid activist shouted as he attempted to form a human shield across the recently removed door of a cellular-phone outlet. "We are here to fight against child labor! You are not invited to be a part of this!"

"Let's go hit Niketown!" a looter replied, embracing the globalization spirit.

Within an hour the chaos had provoked tear-gas attacks from police ringing the downtown area, culminating in a declaration of civil emergency, a curfew, a request for National Guard occupation—and an effective answer to the question of what happens when dissimilar elements unite.

MANY COMMENTATORS SEEMED genuinely surprised at the unwashed hordes that descended on this rainy city and turned it upside down. They shouldn't have been. Throughout the 1990s, the Pacific Northwest has been a hotbed of radical activism. President Reagan and President Bush both faced protests here (the latter dubbing Portland "the Beirut of North America" after one particularly rough reception). And Hillary Clinton was rumored to have been so shaken by the conservative activists who greeted her in Seattle in 1994 that she now visits the city only to attend tightly controlled fundraisers. Although the Pacific Northwest is seen back East as a reservoir of laid-back good-naturedness, with its liberal enclaves of Portland and Eugene, Oregon, and its conservative bastions in eastern Oregon and Washington, this area is actually uniquely suited to generating large numbers of protesters, regardless of their ideological slant.

And perhaps that's why the 1999 WTO Ministerial met here. The United States' recent push to include labor conditions as an explicit issue in trade agreements has been met with derision by developing nations. The U.S. insistence on workers' rights, they contend, is a form of protectionism thinly veiled in false altruism.

But the American public takes child-labor laws and minimum wages seriously, and it consistently makes trade an issue in national elections. Perhaps the U.S. government wanted to show other countries how much our electorate really cares about these issues, thus strengthening America's position at the bargaining table. So they chose a city where they could be sure that thousands would join forces to march through the streets in the largest united front of the decade. A brilliant strategy, when you think about it.

It's just too bad they didn't separate everyone first. ■

CHARLES DUHIGG is a writer in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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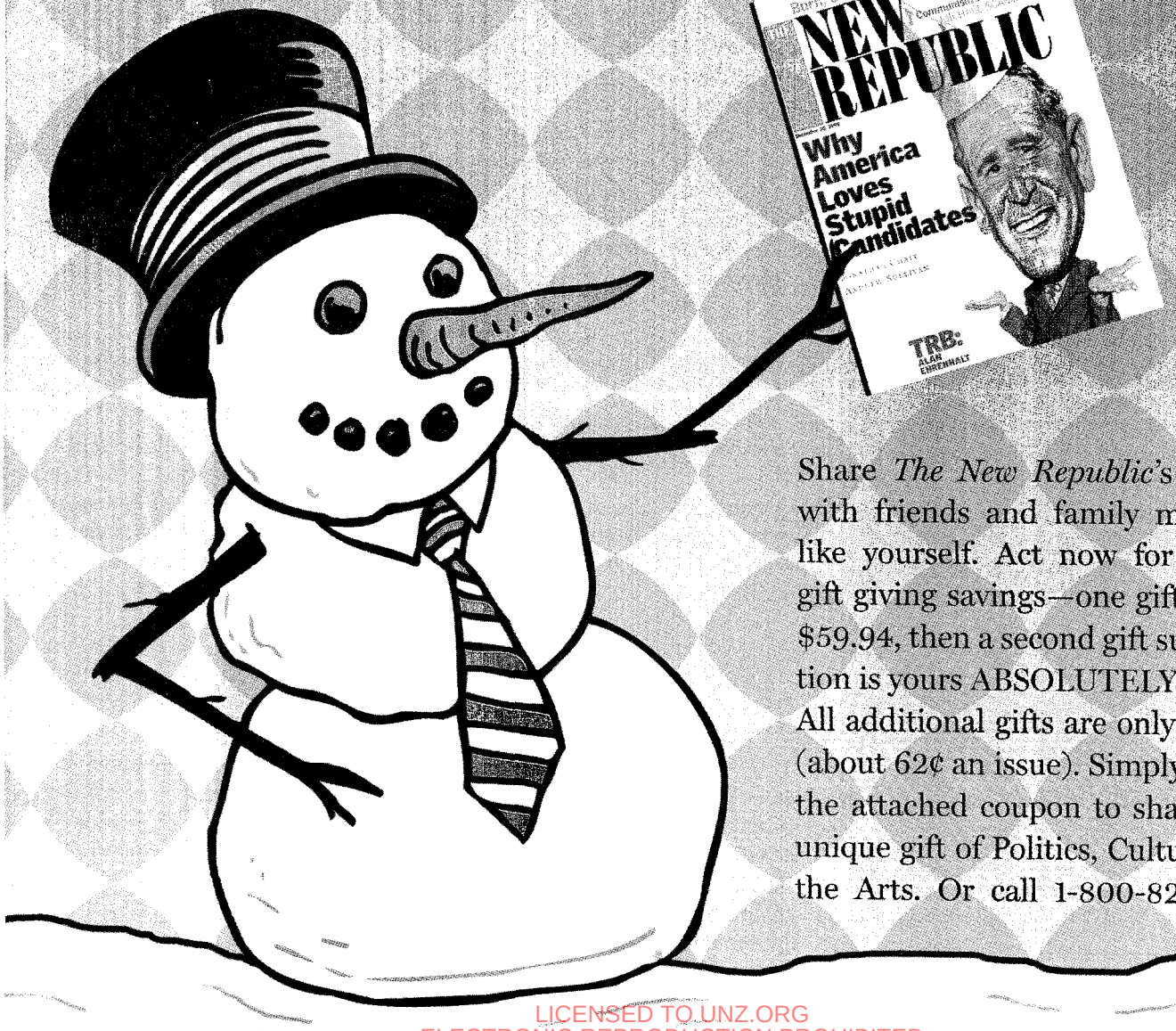

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There's chaos in Seattle. Fabulous.

Trading Up

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

THERE WAS SOMETHING extraordinary about the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle this week, and it wasn't the rioting—which, after all, was carried out by a fringe, idiot element. What was strange was that multitudes would turn out to chant against hitherto obscure economic negotiators in a time of record-breaking prosperity. One might have expected such scenes during an economic depression. But this is a moment of rising incomes. Indeed, many of the protesters must have arrived via jet aircraft, stayed in hotels, and charged their purchases on Visa cards. Do the Seattle protests indicate that there is something dreadfully wrong in America that the rest of us just aren't picking up on?

Actually, they indicate the opposite; the Seattle chaos was, in fact, terrific news. That thousands would line the streets to shout against the WTO suggests that the really serious problems of American society are sufficiently in remission that it's getting increasingly harder to find things to be outraged about. Throughout this century, street demonstrators have protested the suppression of unions, destitution in the Dust Bowl, civil rights horrors, discrimination against women and gays, free-speech restrictions, police brutality, the draft, the Vietnam War, both sides of the abortion quandary—all grave, fundamental problems. This year the issues that draw street demonstrators are the genetic modification of canola oil and WTO side letters on cross-border intellectual-property enforcement. Fabulous.

Of course, the United States still has many flaws, but people would not be so focused on the WTO if the trends were not largely positive. Crime is declining, the environment is ever cleaner and better-protected, unemployment and inflation are at sustained lows, education levels are rising, standards of living and public health have never been better, the country is becoming more tolerant, and the economic boom just gets louder. Internationally, military tensions are the lowest they've been in a century, nuclear weapons are being dismantled, democracy is gaining ground in most of the world, global population growth is slowing, and the U.N. "human development" index shows that most of the world's impoverished are gaining ground. All kinds of problems persist, but the overall picture is so encouraging it's almost spooky.

That so many trends are basically positive does not excuse the United States from facing its many ongoing social faults. Even during this time of plenty, 13 percent of Americans remain below the poverty line; some 44.3 million lack health insurance. And, with our nonmilitary foreign aid down to a postwar low of just 0.08 percent of GNP, our commitment to helping the world's one billion disadvantaged is more questionable than ever.

But a basically positive social trend line does allow citizens the luxury of getting exercised about ever-more-minor issues. There is now a huge flap over genetically modified crops, even though there is no scientific evidence that they have harmed even one person. Blatant racial and gender discrimination is just about over, creating a sociological space in which to worry about subtler forms of bias. A generation ago, environmentalists struggled to curb pollution on the order of parts per million; now lawsuits turn on parts per trillion or even quadrillion. We can afford to fixate on such tertiary concerns now that the primary problems are under control.

ULTIMATELY, IT MAY be the trend toward economic betterment that creates the circumstances in which protesters become bellicose about trade treaties. Information products constructed by the growing world economy allow huge numbers of people to learn about the antics of the WTO; travel services from the same economy make it practical to attend protests on a tight schedule; income from that economy allows its opponents to take time off from work to make themselves heard. If the global economic order were really as oppressive as the Seattle protesters claim, they wouldn't have had the means to fly in and spend their week protesting.

And, while it is indisputable that the global economy is increasing some aspects of income inequality, it is doing so at an ever-higher level. That is, the top one percent may be gaining the most, but the overall situation is better for almost everyone. As Christopher DeMuth of the American Enterprise Institute has said, even considering income inequality, free-market economic trends of the postwar era have "yielded relatively greater benefits for the poor than for the well-to-do." During this century, those on the lower end of the economic scale have seen much bigger jumps in life span, education, standards of living, health care quality, job safety, increased leisure time, increased leisure activities, and so on than those on the top have.

This is not to say that free trade will solve all the world's ills or even that the WTO is necessarily a good idea. Free-market economics is not a magical force—merely one that is better than any other system at improving net well-being. Through the last generation, developing nations with open, WTO-style trade policies have enjoyed, on average, three times as much economic growth as those with closed systems. Many problems remain in the open-trade nations, including problems of inequality. It's just that such nations are better-off (and, generally, politically freer) than they would be without open markets.

And it is precisely because free-market economics has created an American society in which fewer than ever before are illiterate or exhausted from debilitating physical labor that vast numbers of people are now in a position to learn the details of WTO decisions, dislike those details, and express themselves. Except for the broken windows, the Battle for Seattle is cause to celebrate. ■

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Moscow Dispatch

In General

By Andrew Meier

On a Sunday in mid-November, while Russian bombers, attack helicopters, and artillery gunners were hard at work laying waste to Chechnya 1,000 miles to the south, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin decided to take in a little tennis. It was the men's final of the Kremlin Cup, and Putin, dapper in a blue blazer and a polo shirt, was on hand at the event that marks the start of winter for Moscow's notables. When the stadium announcer informed the crowd of Putin's presence, a crescendo of applause interrupted play, as Putin—who, until Boris Yeltsin tapped him in August as his chosen successor, was a political unknown—rose to acknowledge his newfound following.

But Putin was not the biggest celebrity in the stadium's VIP section that day. That honor fell to the individual sitting adjacent to him, a barrel-chested man stuffed uncomfortably into a tweed jacket. Despite his conspicuously un-dapper figure, flashbulbs popped each time the man rose from his seat. Indeed, at times it seemed that the man in the ill-fitting jacket was drawing more attention than the back-and-forth of the little yellow ball. Who was the object of such scrutiny? As almost anyone in the stadium that day could have told you, it was General Anatoli Kvashnin, the chief of the general staff and, thanks to the brutish sequel to Russia's first Chechen debacle (a.k.a. "The Generals Strike Back"), Russia's newest celebrity.

Kvashnin's newfound fame marks an ominous turn—not just for the Chechen people but also for Russia's diseased body politic. During the Yeltsin era's entire ugly span, Russia's long odds for democratic reform have never looked longer. As the political and military camps conspire, led respectively by Putin and Kvashnin, Russia's second Chechen imbroglio is blighting whatever scant liberal ethics the voting populace still has. With more than 220,000 Chechens forced from their homes, the war has, of course, launched a humanitarian crisis. But the war's ultimate tragedy may be political: the demise of the last vestiges of Western aspiration among Russia's political class. And, in Kvashnin's current prominence, that demise is most dramatically displayed.

To fretful diplomats and aid workers in the West, it may look as if the Russians have picked up where they left off in Chechnya in 1996. But this Chechen campaign differs markedly from the first. Unlike the 1994–1996 war, which sparked impassioned dissent and protest in Moscow, round two has the near-unanimous backing of Russia's unruly political factions and, just as importantly, the country's fledgling private media. And, while a host of reasons for this unity exist—from the four Russian apartment buildings allegedly blown up by Chechen terrorists to the propitious precedent of NATO's police work in Serbia to the blockade that keeps all but a few foreign reporters out of Chechen-occupied Chechnya—Kvashnin may be the single biggest one. His strategy in Chechnya of bombing and blasting from afar, avoiding all contact with the enemy, has won him the gratitude of countless Russian mothers.

That's not to say that the general has always been a popular figure. Indeed, Kvashnin was closely linked to the wildly unpopular first Chechen war. As the man in charge of the North Caucasus military region, he was a lightning rod for criticism during the inaugural Chechen bloodbath, and, when Russia finally retreated from the region, Kvashnin seemed doomed to fade away. But, during the first spring after Russia's ignoble withdrawal from Chechnya, Kvashnin—who had impressed Yeltsin with his dogged loyalty throughout the worst of the first Chechen war—was catapulted to the top of the armed forces general staff in Moscow after Yeltsin's top choice for the job, Colonel General Viktor Chechevatov, had to withdraw from consideration because of news reports about corruption under his command. Back in Moscow, Kvashnin quickly filled a power vacuum among the generals and built up a loyal band of fellow commanders—the men now leading the charge on Grozny.

But, while Kvashnin may have had the admiration of some in the military and in the government, he didn't win over the public at large until the NATO campaign against Serbia. Although most of Moscow's top men in uniform grunted their disapproval of the campaign before every available TV camera, Kvashnin was the only one to take action, masterminding the mad dash by the Russian peacekeeping troops that seized Slatina airport in Pristina right after NATO halted its bombing. For applying the ultimate balm to Russians' bruised egos by showing up the West—not to mention the entire Russian government, save Yeltsin and Alexander Voloshin, his shadowy chief of staff—Kvashnin earned the veneration of partisans from Russia's far left to its far right.

Since then, Kvashnin has maintained a high profile, becoming a frequent font of rousing, hypernationalistic sentiments. For instance, when President Clinton unveiled his national missile-defense plan, official Moscow frowned and said it would violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Kvashnin, however, upped the ante, threatening that the missile-defense system would force Russia "to take retaliatory steps and raise the effectiveness of our strategic nuclear forces." No fan of NATO's eastward expansion, Kvashnin recently lashed out at the alliance, accusing it of wanting to penetrate "far beyond the zone of NATO responsibility." Chechnya II has given Kvashnin an even larger soapbox. In October, for instance, as the Chechen campaign went into full swing, Kvashnin found time to do a battlefield question-and-answer session with *Zavtra*, Russia's premier anti-Semitic, fascist broadsheet. Kvashnin assured *Zavtra*'s devout that "the feeling of patriotism has always been, is now, and always will be in a Russian man. It's in our blood, in our genes." For good measure, he added: "We are liberating the Chechen

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people from the medieval yoke of bandits and murderers."

As Chechen village after Chechen village falls with—at least according to Russian television—minimal Russian bloodshed, the Putin-Kvashnin union is building momentum. Now nearly everyone in Moscow stands in one extremely hard line. Even Anatoli Chubais, erstwhile darling of Harvard University and the International Monetary Fund, donned a black leather jacket for a recent photo-op in Gudermes, Chechnya's second-largest city. (Now head of Russia's electricity monopoly, Chubais brought a ceremonial torch to Gudermes to mark the return of Russian gas to Russian-occupied Chechnya.)

INDEED, SO FAR only one prominent figure has dared to take on Kvashnin: Igor Sergeyev, Yeltsin's defense minister. Sergeyev, hardly an intellectual or a liberal, looks like both in comparison with Kvashnin. "They belong to very different camps," says Alexander Zhilin, a former Soviet colonel and, as a columnist for *Moskovskiye Novosti*, one of Russia's most astute military analysts. "Sergeyev leads the generals of the old Soviet school. Kvashnin heads the hungry pack of younger generals, those now commanding the troops in Chechnya." Sergeyev, a lifer in the strategic nuclear forces, is more cautious and sober-minded—and Kvashnin is chasing hard on his heels. "Since Slatina, Kvashnin has made no secret of his ambitions," says Zhilin. "He wants the top job."

But even Sergeyev, in his effort to fend off Kvashnin, is succumbing to the anti-American winds blowing through Moscow and has recently ratcheted up his own rhetoric. In mid-November, he told a biannual conclave of the brass that the United States intended to "weaken Russia" and "establish its full control over the North Caucasus" and that "the national interests of the United States would be met if a conflict fanned from outside smoldered permanently in the North Caucasus." Sergeyev's tough talk has raised a few eyebrows in Moscow. "It's not Sergeyev's nature to launch public attacks," says Dmitri Trenin, a defense analyst at the Moscow Carnegie Center. "But he must talk the anti-NATO talk to keep an edge on Kvashnin and to keep the generals within his reins."

Naturally, Kvashnin and Sergeyev deny rumors of dissent in the war party. But, behind closed doors, rifts have emerged. The first was over the decision to cross the Terek River. In September, Moscow amassed troops on the northern bank of the Terek, in northern Chechnya. At the time, Putin promised to build a cordon sanitaire, a buffer against the bandits to the south. Sergeyev wanted to keep that vow—to curtain off Chechnya and leave it at that. Kvashnin, however, wanted to push on. And, just as he had for the Slatina march, he won Yeltsin's blessing.

It's doubtful that the Kvashnin-Sergeyev rivalry will remain behind closed doors for long. On December 19, Russians will vote in the first Duma elections since 1995. The insiders are betting that, should Putin be pressured to form a new government in the wake of an anti-Kremlin surge in the Duma, Kvashnin will get his wish and Sergeyev will go. (Kvashnin has already made campaign swings, recently visiting troops far from the front, in Nizhny Novgorod on the Volga River and in Vladivostok in the far east.) While Yeltsin aides say they disapprove of Kvashnin's ambitions—his anti-Western reflexes, one Kremlin official says, are "unseemly"—there's no denying that, thus far, Kvashnin's Chechen adventure has paid political dividends for Yeltsin back home. After all, before Chechnya II, Yeltsin was under siege, as few in Moscow need reminding. Financial scandals boiled as the nascent alliance between Moscow's muscular mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, and ex-Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov rose fast in the polls. In Chechnya, Putin and Kvashnin have handed Yeltsin a sorely needed diversion. The job of defense minister may be Kvashnin's reward.

Still, even if Kvashnin fails to steal Sergeyev's seat, he and the young generals have already reshaped Russia's political future. They have created a platform for Putin, who on November 24 reached a landmark for Russian prime ministers of late—100 days in office. Ominously, they have also revived Russians' pride. "We are witnessing a consolidation of the nation," an eminent young Russian historian of Stalinism recently told me. "For the first time since Yeltsin stood on that tank in 1991, Russians have something to feel good about."

Such joy comes at a price. Few believe Kvashnin and Co. could pull off a putsch. Many even doubt that they will manage a triumph in Chechnya. But, if they succeed in making the Chechen card Putin's ace in his effort to succeed Yeltsin next July, they may lay the groundwork for a jingoistic, war-fed regime to follow in Yeltsin's wake. As one smart, young officer—far down Kvashnin's chain of command—told me last week, "When heroes arise in this country, I start to get scared." ■

China's going to enter the WTO. Deal with it.

Open Door

By JOHN B. JUDIS

ON NOVEMBER 15, when President Clinton's weary negotiators agreed to back China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), they set the stage for the last great struggle of this presidency. The battle lines are clear. Arrayed behind the administration is the entire political establishment: the four leading Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, every living former secretary of state and secretary of the treasury, and every major business lobby and farm lobby in Washington, D.C. Arrayed against it is a diverse, burgeoning counter-establishment—including the AFL-CIO, Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, the religious right, and Pat Buchanan. At stake is the future of U.S. business in Asia, the future of the WTO, and the future relationship between the world's most powerful nation and its most populous.

At first glance, it seems plausible that the Clintonites could

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lose. True, they have defeated their adversaries before—on NAFTA and in every one of the annual struggles over granting China "most favored nation" (MFN) trading status. But the opposition has clearly been gaining strength, and in the last big trade showdown—in 1997, over granting the administration "fast-track" authority to negotiate trade agreements without fear of congressional amendment—it handed the administration a stinging defeat. Many commentators saw that defeat as evidence that the old anti-NAFTA forces had gained enough recruits to block any major new trade initiative.

Will they bring down the administration's latest initiative? In a word, no. The circumstances today are entirely different from those in 1997. Unless China launches another Tiananmen Square-style massacre or an unprovoked attack on Taiwan, by this time next year it will be a member of the WTO—with Congress's blessing.

FIRST OF ALL, opponents of the Clinton-China deal will be operating on highly unfavorable legislative terrain. Congress cannot actually vote on whether to approve China's entry into the WTO. That is an executive-branch decision. All Congress can do is reject part of the deal the administration made with the Chinese—specifically its agreement to grant permanent "normal trading relations" (formerly known as MFN status) to China by ending its annual review of China's trading and human rights practices under the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Act. But, if Congress refuses to amend Jackson-Vanik, that won't prevent China from joining the WTO—the United States has already pledged not to block Chinese entry into the organization, regardless of how Congress votes.

Instead, Congress will be giving China an excuse to renege on concessions it made to the United States in exchange for permanent normal trading relations (NTR)—including lowering tariffs on U.S. farm and automobile imports; reducing barriers on foreign investment in banking, telecommunications, hotels, and tourism; and allowing the United States to impose temporary tariffs if surges in Chinese imports threaten U.S. domestic industries. Since all these measures would immediately benefit American companies and workers, opponents of China's membership in the WTO will be seen as cutting off their noses to spite their faces.

To make matters worse for China's critics, the Republican leadership has postponed the vote on NTR until at least the winter and perhaps the spring. By that time, China may already have been admitted to the WTO. Were the United States to deny China NTR at that point, that would actually violate the WTO's rules, which prohibit tariffs directed against only one country. In short, as one union economist who is organizing opposition to the agreement admits, "there is a lot of confusion, a lot of unclarity about what exactly a 'no' vote on normal trade relations would mean."

Past trade battles have also rested on how united and how determined to press its case each side was at a given moment. That in turn depended on the particular agreement at hand. In the annual battles over China's NTR, Washington's foreign policy establishment and business lobbies enjoyed an advantage over human rights and evangelical organizations because they could point to dire results if normal trade relations were rejected. In the 1997 debate over fast-track trading authority, proponents could not point to any immediate benefits of adopting the procedure, while opponents, noting the growing American trade deficit with Mexico, could conjure up the specter of another NAFTA. But, with the coming battle over China and the WTO, the proponents once again have a clear advantage.

Business leaders and farmers can point to definite advantages from the November deal. Auto companies can look to bigger sales, movie companies to wider film distribution, telecommunications firms to participation in the Chinese market, and farmers to new customers who can relieve the growing glut at home. This potential windfall is sparking a concerted lobbying effort. The Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce have already formed a coalition and are dividing up which legislators to pressure. The Business Roundtable, which is composed of chief executives from Fortune 500 companies, has picked 71 congressional districts where its members have workers who can be organized to support the November agreement. The business lobbies did this kind of grassroots lobbying during the NAFTA vote but not during fast track, and they are already confident that they will carry the day. "If you set aside the 'stray asteroid' risk," says Chris Nelson, a trade analyst from Samuels International, a Washington lobbying firm, "nobody feels this will be defeated. The vote is a foregone conclusion."

On the agriculture side, citrus farmers in Texas, California, and Florida; beleaguered grain exporters in the Midwest, Great Plains, and Pacific Northwest; and meat exporters in the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states are also mobilizing to back the agreement. Democratic Representative Barney Frank, a critic of the deal, admits that pressure from agricultural interests may cancel labor's opposition to the treaty. Says Frank, "Labor has the votes, but not enough. The agricultural people are going to win."

THE BUSINESS AND farm lobbies will carry the Senate without breaking a sweat. The test will come in the House. But there, too, opponents don't have the numbers. During the Clinton years, House Republicans have never contributed more than 79 votes against a major trade pact. That's how many GOP opponents NTR/MFN attracted in 1997, when Gary Bauer's Family Research Council and the Christian Coalition were at the height of their power, House members were determined to embarrass the Clinton administration, and the Chinese government had been implicated in the 1996 election scandal. But opponents of granting permanent NTR will be lucky to attract 50 Republicans next year. Business and farm organizations enjoy maximum leverage in an election year. Bauer has left the Family Research Council to run for president, and the Christian Coalition has fallen apart. And the Republican congressional leadership backs the agreement, as does George W. Bush.

If 50 or 60 Republicans vote against permanent NTR, Democrats would have to oppose the legislation by five or six

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to one. Labor pressure should sway some Democrats, but not that many. Democrats voted by a ratio of only three to two against NAFTA and five to four against NTR/MFN. In addition, admitting China to the WTO will bring out divisions among Democrats that transcend the old Labor Democrat/New Democrat divide. The Clinton deal should gain support from Democratic trade hawks who, unlike the protectionists and isolationists, back the WTO's multilateral approach to trade agreements. They don't want to disband the WTO but to strengthen its hand through new rules on labor rights and environmental protection.

The key person in this camp is House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt. Gephardt opposed NAFTA, fast track, and MFN, but he backed the legislation establishing the WTO and actively encouraged the administration's negotiations last spring with the Chinese. Last month, after the administration announced the WTO deal, labor leaders met with Gephardt to map out a response, but, to their disappointment, they discovered that he would not join them in denouncing the agreement. Instead, he told them he was looking for a way for Congress to accept China's entry without abandoning its pressure on human rights and labor rights. One labor participant declared afterwards in amazement, "He is looking for a way to support it."

THERE ARE OTHER cracks in the old anti-MFN coalition. One of the most prominent human rights organizations, Human Rights Watch, spoke positively of China's entry into the WTO. Even the AFL-CIO is probably not united in its opposition. Manufacturing unions, which feel directly threatened by cheap imports, have always taken a much more militant stand against trade agreements than public-sector and service-worker unions. And there is reason to believe that AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, who comes from the Service Employees International Union, does not really have the stomach for an anti-NTR crusade.

Earlier this year, the administration appointed Sweeney and Jay Mazur, the president of UNITE (the textile and apparel workers' union), to its Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, which was dominated by business leaders and lobbyists. In October, Sweeney and Mazur signed a committee letter backing Clinton's WTO agenda in exchange for the administration's commitment to promoting a WTO working group on workers' rights. When the letter was released, union leaders, including the heads of the Steelworkers and the Teamsters, accused Sweeney of conceding too much. "He was under serious attack for the first time since he took office," said one labor official. When the China agreement was announced, the usually pro-Clinton Sweeney, the labor official said, attempted to "mollify this growing rebellion internally" by stridently denouncing the White House, calling it "disgustingly hypocritical" for reaching the agreement while it "postures for workers' rights."

But there is another obstacle to an all-out union attack on the WTO deal: the unions' endorsement of Al Gore, an enthusiastic backer of the agreement. One labor official explained the dilemma: "It is definitely going to hurt [Gore], especially if there is a big labor campaign against it. How can unions seriously mobilize for the vice president of the administration who just did this? They are dodging this question." One answer, of course, is to let Gore's candidacy dangle in the wind. But the other is to downplay the unions' opposition to the agreement, thus moving the public debate back to health care and Social Security. That would help Gore and make passage of the WTO deal a foregone conclusion. And the unions might do just that. After all, they're probably going to lose on NTR anyway—why not curry favor with the leading Democratic candidate for president by delivering the votes they promised? ■

Campaign Journal

Down to Size

By DANA MILBANK

STRATHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

"SO, WHEN ARE you going to write something nice about us?" Gary Bauer's senior adviser, Jeff Bell, chided me during one of his candidate's campaign stops in New Hampshire. Bell's needling is much deserved. Looking back through my stories, I found nothing but gratuitous mockery of the barely five-foot-six-inch former director of a middlebrow Christian think tank who now fancies himself presidential timber.

When Bauer marched in an Independence Day parade in New Hampshire, your correspondent wrote that he and his aides couldn't even "persuade some spectators to shake the candidate's hand and take his leaflets." When he placed fourth in the Iowa straw poll this summer, I dismissed him as "diminutive," noting: "It is difficult to picture Bauer as a serious prospect." This fall, I mentioned that Bauer was planning a trip to California, "not that anybody cares." Next, I sought to analyze his one percent showing in the polls.

In short (so to speak), my coverage of Bauer has been nasty and brutish, and I hereby apologize. To set the record straight, Bauer is a solid, well-intentioned man, a sensible speaker, a fierce debater, and a wily candidate. Instead of criticism, he deserves high praise, in particular for the great service he is performing for his country: he is overseeing the demise of the religious right as a political force in the 2000 presidential race. Now, Bell may not consider this a nice thing to say; Bauer, after all, is supposed to be the religious right's hero, not its Czar Nicholas. But I mean it as the highest compliment. Bauer's candidacy has fragmented social conservatives. And for that Americans should be grateful.

For conservatives, these are not the best of times. The only serious Republican presidential contenders are George W. Bush and John McCain, both of whom are running as moderates. The Democrats are favored to regain the House, while the fallen Newt Gingrich, his mistress exposed, joins the ranks of GOP hypocrites. The president of Hillsdale College, a conservative beacon, stands accused of an affair with

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his daughter-in-law, who subsequently killed herself. Senator Bob Smith, applauded by the far right when he quit the godless GOP, dismounted from his high horse and crawled back to the party when offered a committee chairmanship. As the conservative writer David Brooks put it in a *New York Times* op-ed, American conservatism is "flamboyantly cracking up."

So, who killed the far right? Pat Buchanan, of course, has done his share by quitting the Republican Party. But, at the moment, the greatest damage is being wrought by the Bush-Forbes-Bauer love triangle. George W. has stiffed the conservatives on most issues, throwing them only a few bones. Forbes, his critics believe, is an impostor, stealing votes from more legitimate conservatives. And, finally, there's Bauer, whose candidacy prevents the right from unifying behind Forbes.

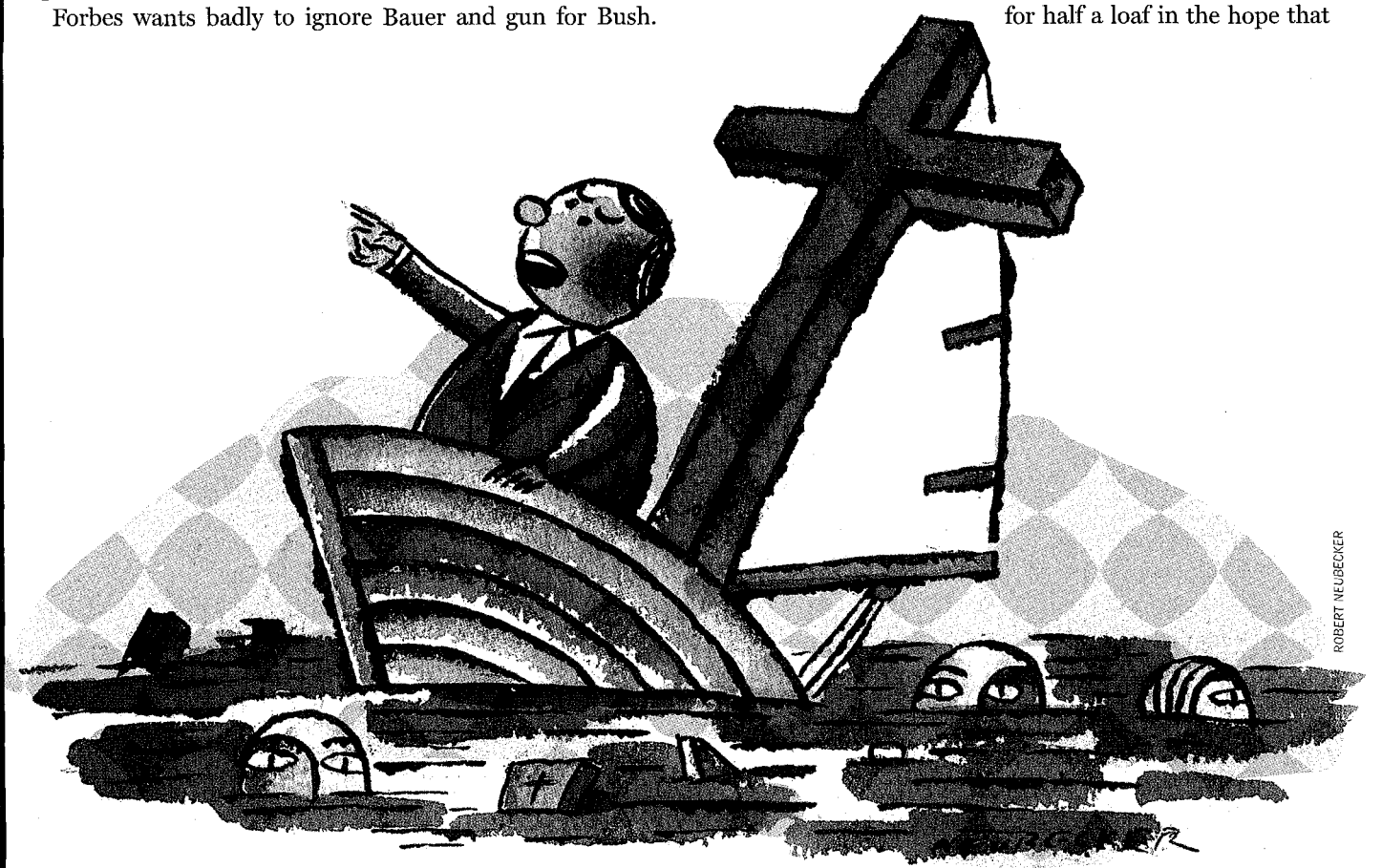
Forbes, if you measure by polls and bank accounts, is the conservatives' best chance against Bush, and he's trying to prove it. Last week, he assembled a group of top conservative activists such as Lyn Nofziger, Brent Bozell, Richard Viguerie, and Paul Weyrich; calling themselves "Conservatives for Forbes," they plan a road show in Iowa and New Hampshire. Advisers to Forbes dismiss Bauer, a bit too hopefully, as "a nonfactor" and "a wasted vote." Bauer and his followers, of course, insist he's in the race to win. But others attribute another motive to Bauer: He wants to emerge from the race as king of the religious right. The post is up for grabs, with Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson aging and Ralph Reed quitting the business. "Bauer's not running for president—he's running to be the next Pat Robertson," says Greg Mueller, Forbes's communications director and a former Buchanan operative.

Forbes wants badly to ignore Bauer and gun for Bush. Forbes routinely scolds George W.—for his "New Democrat" education policy, his "typical Washington" Social Security plan, his "spending growth twice the rate of Clinton-Gore," his "nothing on the table" health care policy, and his China coddling. "There's more to life than fund-raisers," Forbes told the absent Bush at an Arizona debate on November 21, ridiculing the Texas governor for his "teleprompters" and "tutors." When a Bush-friendly group ran anti-Forbes ads, Forbes, in a curious inversion of 1996, bemoaned Bush's "negative smear tactics."

But Bush has a surprising ally in his fight against Forbes: Bauer. Bauer hammers Forbes for his free-trade views, calling him the "son of a tycoon" who is "trying to pull a fast one." He charges that, under Forbes's flat tax, "a lot of Fortune 500 companies would pay zero tax while waitresses, truck drivers, and others pay who-knows-what." By pillorying Forbes, Bauer keeps both mainstream candidates, Bush and McCain, from having to contend with a united attack from the right.

To be sure, splits in the religious right are nothing new; even Ronald Reagan wasn't its unanimous choice. But Bauer has enough support in churches to maintain his candidacy until the Republican convention, and Forbes has the money to do the same. That leaves little hope of conservative unity any time soon. "It's not going to happen," Bell says.

Much of the conservatives' disarray can be traced to the craftiness of the Bush campaign, which has cleverly signed on strategists such as Ralph Reed and lured top conservative activists to Austin for the royal treatment. Robertson and other Christian conservative leaders have made a calculation much like the one liberals made in 1992 when they backed Bill Clinton: though Bush isn't one of them, they'll settle for half a loaf in the hope that



ROBERT NEUBECKER

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Bush's administration would be marginally friendlier than Gore's or Bradley's. But, to keep these conservatives on board, Bush must tiptoe around delicate issues—hence the increasingly comical scripting of his public appearances.

"NO QUESTIONS," A Bush press aide reminded the assembled media as I caught up with the candidate's entourage here last week for a tour of the Timberland headquarters. Bush then proceeded through the tour as if he were acting in a short play. In scene one, he met with a group of young people, telling one of them, "You're an articulate dude." In scene two ("OK, let's move on to the next part," the press handler said), Bush wore safety goggles, inspected a shoe prototype, and kissed a supporter. In scene three, Bush delivered his stump speech to a captive group of workers. For an encore, he was led to a nearby farmhouse, where he met with locals. Spying reporters in the house, Bush conferred privately with an aide, who asked the journalists to step back and, a few minutes later, declared: "Can we ask all members of the media to exit the house now?" A photographer bristled at the command. "*Sieg heil*," he muttered as he filed out.

Still, Bush, perhaps stung by the recent doubts about his intellect (see "Race to the Bottom," by Jonathan Chait, page 26), felt a need to go beyond his usual script in Stratham. When a Timberland worker asked him about military pay, he wandered off into a display of his vast knowledge of policy: a discussion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, marginal rates, and entitlements. "And then, fourthly," he continued, "I want to make sure the education system functions in America." After this dizzying transition, he apologized for his ostentatious display of wonkery. "I took advantage of your question to head off into the wild blue yonder," Bush said. Show-off.

When Bush does reveal himself, his thoughts form a pattern—and it's not a conservative one. The purpose of his visit to Timberland was to praise City Year, a community service program that happens to be part of Clinton's AmeriCorps program, which anti-government conservatives loathe. When I asked Bush about this afterward, he replied: "I support a broad range of volunteer programs. This is one approach, not *the* approach." It's this kind of packaging—progressive tendencies wrapped in conservative rhetoric—that has allowed the moderate Bush to subdue the religious right so effectively.

Bush, however, gets only part of the credit for the conservative quiescence. Some of it must rest with Forbes. The departures of Dan Quayle and Buchanan have given Forbes an opening. But his millions haven't won him double digits in the polls anywhere but Iowa, and there he's battling for second place with McCain, who isn't even an official competitor. One explanation for Forbes's slump is that voters are rejecting damaged goods. The Republicans who have been national candidates before—Buchanan, Quayle, Lamar Alexander—have all flopped. But Forbes also faces lingering distrust among the social conservatives he offended in 1996, when he dissed the Christian Coalition in Iowa.

Alan Keyes and Orrin Hatch are doing their best to siphon off parts of the conservative vote, too, but with little success. Keyes is too broke and bizarre to be much of a threat, and Hatch is just plain hopeless. But Bauer has enough church-based support and money to make Forbes miserable. Last week, Bauer's campaign spent $130,000 for TV ads in Iowa. Bauer hopes to pick off Forbes for second place there; more likely all he'll do is harass a fellow conservative.

Yet Bauer soldiers on. Wretched poll ratings? Dim prospects? So what? "Where I grew up, I was taught that if you were in a fight and you were the last guy standing, that meant that you won," Bauer likes to say. But the Republican nomination is not, in the end, a street brawl. It will take a team effort for conservatives to pose a serious threat to Bush, and Bauer so far prefers to play singles. ■

Is GWB our JFK?

Party Animals

By ANDREW SULLIVAN

HE WAS A natural with crowds, even though many of them had only a vague idea why they liked him. "There is about him a subtle blending of deference and self-confidence, of engaging shyness and mature forthrightness. He radiates a gentle, honest warmth and people are instinctively at ease with him," wrote *The New York Times Magazine*. "When ... not reciting memorized lines in an official speech or rendering careful answers in a formal interview, he is physically expansive and verbally irreverent, folksy and feisty, a politician more playful than most of his peers," *The New York Times* wrote about his campaign manner. Forty years separate these quotes. The first is about John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in the fall of 1959. The second is about George W. Bush's presidential campaign in the fall of 1999.

No one has much of an interest in exploring the parallels between two young, untested, playful politicians two generations apart. It pleases neither the Kennedy-loving left nor the Kennedy-loathing right. But the resonances between John F. Kennedy's early career and George W. Bush's are, to say the least, striking. They are a reminder that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have a monopoly on rich, not-so-swift kids winging it.

Of the parallels, the most obvious is that neither JFK nor GWB would have been an even faintly credible candidate for the White House had he not been born to a famous and influential father. Both men came to politics reluctantly—JFK after his older brother was killed in World War II, George W. Bush after a long period of rebellious goofing off in his twenties. Both were reluctant dauphins to a dynasty; and both pursued high office in part to avenge slights against paternal pride—JFK to avenge Joseph P. Kennedy's permanent humiliation by the Brahmin aristocracy, GWB to avenge George Bush's 1992 trouncing at the hands of trailer-park trickster Bill Clinton.

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They both grew up privileged and wealthy, with large, extended families. Both had three brothers, and both had a more serious and tenacious younger sibling who also entered politics—Bobby and Jeb. Both spent summers at New England compounds, where family loyalty trumped every other value. Both lost a sister—GWB's sister, Robin, died of leukemia; JFK's sister, Kathleen, was killed in a plane crash. Both were raised to treat sports as a family-bonding ritual. Kennedy had touch football, Bush golf—which he still plays with his father and mother, according to Bill Minutaglio's excellent new Bush biography, *First Son*.

Both grew up saturated with politics and campaigns, and both ably deployed their many relatives in the political game. But both also evidenced extreme ambivalence about the process. "I don't think he really knew if he wanted politics—if he was going to remain with it—or what politics was going to do with him," said JFK's secretary, Mary Davis, about her boss in his earlier years. "No, I didn't want to be president when I was little," Bush told *The New York Times* just after Thanksgiving. "I'm not even sure I wanted to be president when I was big—until recently."

BOTH EARNED "gentleman's Cs" at Ivy League colleges, drank, chased women, were personally sloppy, and drove recklessly. (Car wrecks figure in the youths of both.) On highly political campuses, neither JFK nor GWB involved himself in politics. Bush's main foray into public life during his years at Yale University, according to Minutaglio, was defending his fraternity's use of branding irons in hazing rituals. In the era of Vietnam, Watts, and civil rights, GWB joined the intramural football squad and the social council and played club rugby. According to Minutaglio, the conversation among W.'s roommates was limited: "'Topic A' was sports. Then girls. Then the all-night poker games." According to Jeb Bush, as quoted by Minutaglio, GWB's most prominent characteristic is that he is "just funny, the funniest person he knew, 'really funny.'"

JFK was similarly disengaged at Harvard University. In his astute JFK biography, *A Question of Character*, Thomas Reeves writes that "political organizations, then the rage on campus, did not appeal to [Kennedy]." He was primarily a social animal, he roomed with football players, and he was best known for being, yes, funny. According to a football-player roommate, JFK "had the best sense of humor of any of the Kennedys." JFK's closest friend, Lem Billings, describes Jack as having "the best sense of humor of anybody I've ever known in my life. And I don't think I've ever known anybody who was as much fun."

Fun. Ring a bell? Here's Frank Bruni's account of a campaign swing with GWB, from the November 27 *New York Times*: "[M]ore often, Mr. Bush seems to be having a ball, and why not? His campaign treasury is ripe. His poll numbers are robust. And with every wink, hug, and bit of effortless banter, he projects a spirit as mirthful as many voters would undoubtedly like their futures to be." Bruni also writes: "'How ya' doin' buddy?' is a stock greeting for any man who happens to be in a bookstore, restaurant, or town hall that Mr. Bush sweeps through; more than a few women have gotten kisses on the tops of their heads."

Here is a journalist's account of a JFK campaign swing in 1959: "You'd think that this man loved above all other things the contacts he had with the crowd. He lit up and smiled.... The empathy of the crowd was so plain and so clear." According to Reeves, "A local reporter observed, '[Kennedy] gives the impression of truly liking to shake hands ... [he] offers each member [of the audience] a firm grip, a warm smile, and a murmured "Thank you for coming." Babes in arms and small fry get pats and teasing compliments.'"

LIKE JFK'S, GWB'S substantive positions reflect a pragmatic centrism, protected by a brain trust orchestrated in part by his father. Just as JFK was coached by a range of experts, so GWB's wafer-thin policy proposals are products of a carefully selected group of Republican policy wonks. Philosophically, GWB is a small-government type with a gift for making minorities feel included. So was JFK. Like each of their fathers, neither JFK nor GWB comes across as driven by anything resembling a principle. "I think that's the difficulty in politics," said JFK in 1951. "You are always bound to lose supporters once you take a stand on an issue." Kennedy tried to please both the right and the left of his party without alienating the center. Bush is a carbon copy of him. On civil rights, Kennedy was pure politics before he took office (and, to a large extent, after), privately mollifying Southerners while sending signals to liberals that he was one of them. Even Theodore Sorenson described JFK's early civil rights record as "shaped primarily by political expediency." Bush toes the religious-right line on abortion and gay rights, but he appeals to liberals by posing with racial minorities at every opportunity. Still, expediency is GWB's most consistent theme. "Would you meet with [the Log Cabin Republicans]?" Bush was asked two weeks ago. "Oh, probably not," he replied. "[I]t creates a huge political scene."

The dynamics of the 1959 and 1999 campaigns are also oddly similar. Like JFK, GWB is attempting to replace a president of the opposite party who had presided over eight years of unprecedented prosperity but had come to represent the past. "Prosperity with a Purpose," GWB's campaign theme, was JFK's as well. Within their respective parties, activists were desperate for a win after two lost elections with party warhorses at the head of the ticket. Both JFK and GWB cast their appeal in terms of youth, change, promise—but also responsibility. In fact, it was the combination of JFK's dynamism and his relatively conservative message that made the package sellable. Equally, Bush has managed to adopt an austere conservatism while conveying an image of zest, exuberance, and vigor. Bush also shares with Kennedy religious issues, although the specifics of those issues differ. JFK, nominally a Catholic, had to assuage those afraid of a Catholic putsch. Similarly, Bush (an Episcopalian turned Methodist) must signal to the GOP's evangelical base that he's one of them, while at the same time calming the many Americans terrified of a fundamentalist cabal in the White House.

JFK tried to lock up the nomination early with sheer financial clout. Bush's campaign millions have not, of course, been privately funded or supplemented by Mafia donations, but the disproportionate amount of money Bush controls has

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altered the dynamics of the race in exactly the way Kennedy's war chest did in 1959. Forty years ago, the race for the Democratic nomination became Jack Kennedy's to lose very early on. Here's Reeves again on the tenor of the early campaign: "While Jack was becoming sufficiently self-confident to engage in some off-the-cuff remarks, he still required a complete text of every speech.... Interviewers often found him, as a *Newsweek* story put it, 'candid, informal and disarmingly relaxed.' ... A survey of delegates to the 1956 Democratic National Convention revealed Kennedy ahead of his nearest rival for the 1960 nomination by more than two to one.... Some, [however], questioned ... what [journalist] Cabel Phillips called 'a certain glibness of speech and manner.'" Spooky, no?

Kennedy essentially railroaded his way to the convention, overwhelming the opposition with vastly more money, determination, and organization than other candidates had. The journalist James Reston wrote that the Democrats happily put aside their philosophical and character worries about Kennedy, thinking of the race "in terms of a personality who can win." Hubert Humphrey explained his defeat in the West Virginia primary thus: "You can't beat a million dollars." Elizabeth Dole, anyone?

There are, of course, differences. While GWB has been dogged by personal scandal and rumor, it seems unlikely that he could match his predecessor in that department, especially with regard to women. There is no evidence that GWB is an adulterer or philanderer, let alone as pathologically promiscuous as Kennedy. On the psychologically positive side, GWB is also not his daddy's creature the way JFK was, and there could scarcely be two more dissimilar individuals than Joseph Patrick Kennedy and George Herbert Walker Bush. GWB has also had longer than JFK to outgrow his thought-free youth, and he has the benefit of an emotionally present—perhaps all too present—mother. In Kennedy's defense, JFK, though no intellectual, was far better-read than Bush, and he was certainly far better at pretending to be. He also knew foreign policy and cared about it in a way GWB doesn't—but, during the cold war, candidates were required to. JFK, in other words, was an unstable, fascinating establishment-backer. GWB is a stable, not-so-interesting establishment-backer.

Perhaps the most telling parallel is simply sensibility. It is hard to imagine any presidential candidate since JFK responding to a reporter's question on the telephone by audibly yelling to an adviser across the room to get the answer. Bill Clinton would have known the answer. Ronald Reagan would have responded with a vague, disarming crack. It is not so much that GWB needed to turn to his foreign policy guru, Condoleezza Rice. Candidates are not encyclopedias—nor should they be. It's that W. didn't feel the need to cover up his cluelessness. Whether it's joking about executing Karla Faye Tucker or not knowing the name of the president of Chechnya, GWB above all exudes JFK's frat-boy sense of the absurdity of privilege. It's charming in its way, this preppy insouciance. It's a bit of a game to him, we sense. The trouble, of course, is that it's our country he's playing with. ■

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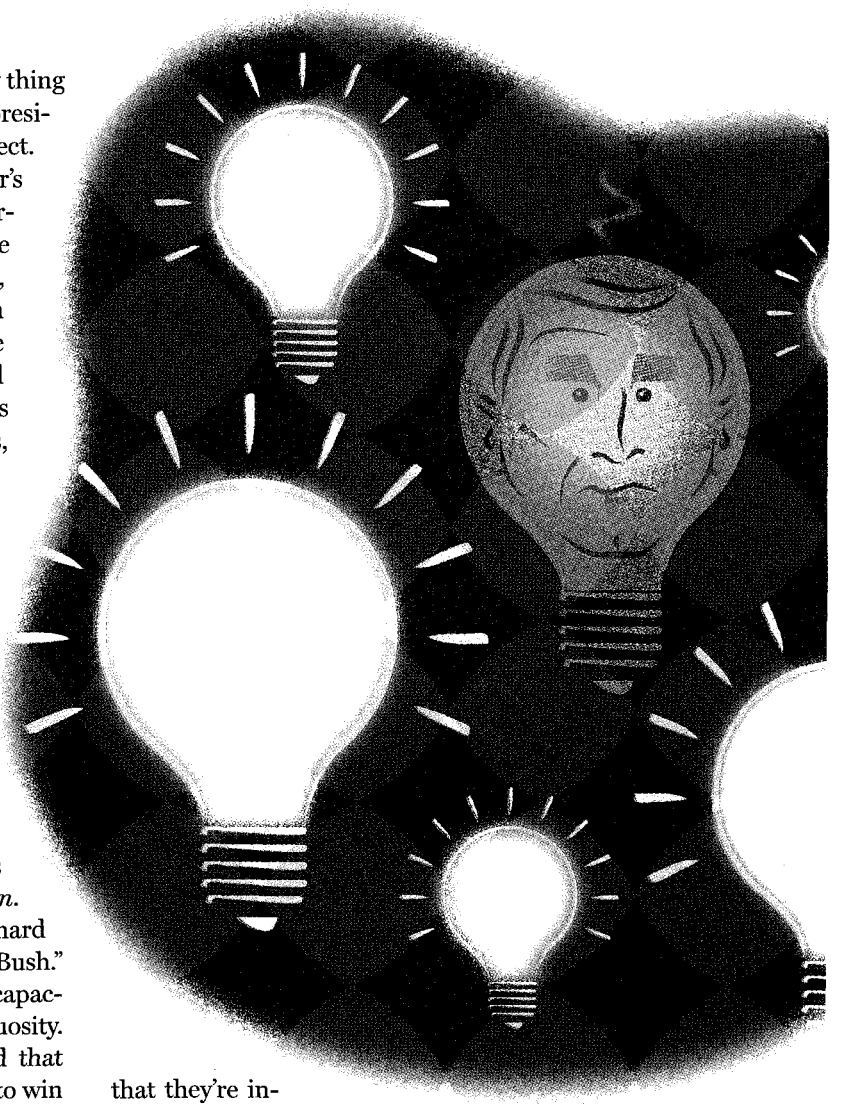
Why, this election year, it's smart to be dumb.

Race to the Bottom

By JONATHAN CHAIT



IT WOULD SEEM, on the face of it, that the only thing standing between George W. Bush and the presidency is a persistent reservation about his intellect. The doubts have crystallized around a reporter's now-famous pop quiz, in which the Texas governor could not identify various difficult-to-pronounce heads of state. Bush, according to many in the press, needs to wonk himself up, and fast. He needs to cocoon himself with all those Stanford Ph.D.s and reemerge with a deep, studied interest in the stability of Central Asia and the efficacy of scattered-site housing. He needs to throw out some acronyms and cite some studies, maybe quote Hayek now and then. He must learn to mask his boredom with the daily grind of government. If he could only show some mastery of the issues, he'd be a brilliant candidate.

Nonsense. Bush hasn't done a bad job of masking his boredom with the details of governance; he's done an excellent job of flaunting it. When asked by Tucker Carlson of *Talk* magazine to enumerate his weaknesses, Bush baldly replied, "Sitting down and reading a 500-page book on public policy or philosophy or something." In another moment with Carlson, Bush reported having read a profile of Al Gore by Louis Menand in which the vice president discusses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. This prompts Menand's observation that "it is a little hard to imagine having this conversation with George W. Bush." Bush does not take umbrage at this slight to his mental capacities. Instead, he sees in it proof of his political virtuosity. "Bush finished the piece," writes Carlson, "convinced that Gore lacks the warmth and personal appeal necessary to win a presidential race." More recently, Bush advisers have confided their pleasure at the pop quiz "fiasco," saying it makes their man seem like a normal guy.

In fact, Bush's lightweight persona has the feel of a deliberate strategy. What Bush understands, and the pundits do not, is that he is a brilliant candidate not despite his anti-intellectualism but because of it. He has stumbled upon a fortuitous moment in which the political culture, tired of wonks and pointy-heads and ideologues, yearns instead for a candidate unburdened by, or even hostile to, ideas. It is a moment made for the chipper governor from Texas, and he is soaring upward, propelled by his own weightlessness.

Of course, journalists have not set out to reward Bush, or other candidates, for being dumb. What they say is that they're interested in "character." But what they don't admit is that this comes to much the same thing.

"Character," in current parlance, means lived experience—preferably outside of politics. It takes into account neither public philosophy nor programmatic detail. In fact, such things tend to mitigate against strong "character," since they suggest an obsession with government. In the current landscape, the coin of the realm is personal qualities such as "leadership" and "authenticity," which are implicitly set against accumulated knowledge or unashamed braininess. "Leaders" are men of action, not men of words. "Authenticity" is a close relative of simplicity—you can much more easily imagine the description applied to, say, a rancher than to a biophysics professor. The obsession with character inherently disfavors a candidacy based on ideas—such as, for instance, Steve

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ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE McCRACKEN

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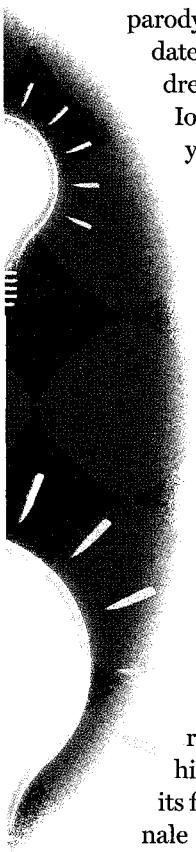
Forbes's—in favor of one based on biography. A superior grasp of issues is irrelevant, or even a hindrance, in that it can detract from a candidate's effort to craft a personal narrative.

Slow-witted candidates, of course, are nothing new. But such candidates can still campaign on ideas—Ronald Reagan and Dan Quayle ran some of the most fiercely ideological campaigns in recent memory. George W. Bush is something new—a slow-witted candidate parading his campaign's lack of substance as a virtue. Consider the chronology of his candidacy. First, Bush decided to run; next, the Republican establishment coalesced around him; and only then were a series of experts dispatched to Austin to help Bush decide what he believes. His most recent TV ads are almost a parody of gauzy non-specificity, portraying the candidate talking with minorities, standing with children, and actually kissing babies. Indeed, with the Iowa caucuses just two months away, Bush has yet to elucidate opinions on most major topics.



All this has elicited raves from the press. Consider some of the adjectives used to describe Bush: "upbeat," "affable," "untroubled"—a man who, as *Talk* put it, "doesn't give a damn what you think of him." Such praise may not be intended to reward Bush for his shallowness, but it does so nonetheless. After all, how could someone fully aware of the stakes involved in running for president maintain such a stress-free demeanor while preparing to determine the course of human history? Even George Will, who cloaks his every utterance with chin-stroking affectation, has explicitly defended Bush on anti-intellectual grounds, writing that "intellect in politics is rare, and perhaps should be."

Bush's early success has set the terms of the race; the other candidates are grasping to match his style. The farce of Al Gore's campaign lies in its frantic efforts to conceal the public-policy rationale for his candidacy. He has the appearance of a man who prepared for a spelling bee and found himself in a swimsuit competition. Not too long ago, Gore's detailed knowledge of defense, technology, and the environment might have been considered his strongest selling point. Today, he and his advisers treat it as a kind of embarrassment. Instead of emphasizing his knowledge, they have trotted out a succession of vignettes—young Al Gore laboring in the fields of Tennessee, enlisting in Vietnam, crusading as a small-town reporter—all meant to portray the vice president (implausibly) as a folksy man not overly interested in government. Arizona Senator John McCain has been wildly applauded for publishing a campaign book that eschews political philosophy in favor of straight personal narrative. And, while McCain has oriented much of his candidacy around the fight for campaign finance reform, the press rarely, if ever, discusses the substance of the bill he proposed. Instead, they view it as further evidence of the personality traits McCain exhibited as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Even Bill Bradley, who disliked talking about his basketball career while in the Senate for fear of looking like a dumb jock, now mentions it at every opportunity—since it makes him look less government-centric than Gore.

DOESN'T THIS DUMBING-DOWN occur every campaign season? Actually, no. Compare the current race to the one in 1992. The telling difference lies not in the comparative brain mass of the candidates but in the way they presented themselves. Eight years ago, candidates waved graphs and ten-point plans. Clinton published a campaign book, *Putting People First*, that laid out nearly everything he would try to do as a first-term president: an economic-stimulus package, a tax hike on the wealthy, a plan to implement universal health care, and so on. In retrospect, it was a nearly pure embodiment of the civics-class model of government: a candidate laying out exactly what he intends to do and asking the voters to judge his platform on its merits. Paul Tsongas put forth a book, *A Call to Economic Arms*, spelling out his economic program in harsh detail, and his itemization of otherwise unpopular measures to reduce the deficit actually won him favor as a truth-teller. Ross Perot promised, if elected, to bring together the nation's foremost policy experts. He did not have defined solutions to problems such as the deficit or health care, but the fact that he sought to cultivate an aura of wonkery is telling, in the same way that Gore's current effort to cultivate an air of folksy disinterest in government is telling.

The serious mood was captured by the press, whose coverage of the campaign, in contrast to today's, stands out as a virtual celebration of intelligence. In 1992, *The Washington Post* marveled at Gore's scientific literacy. "Gore's smartest-guy-in-the-class routine is forgivable: He probably really is the smartest guy in his class," a profile declared, proceeding to describe a Gore speech in which "[i]t seemed as though he had synthesized the entirety of human knowledge since the discovery of fire." Such an interpretation is unimaginable now. More typical of the current thinking is a recent *Post* account that described a similar Gore event as "a down-in-the-weeds policy summit that only a man with a steel-trap brain and a steel rear end would describe as 'fun.'"

It is not that the media covered the presidential hopefuls more favorably in 1992 than it does now. It simply enforced a different standard—programmatic coherence rather than personal style. Consider some of the events of 1992 that were chewed over in the pages of *The Washington Post*: Tsongas "insisted that he was not guilty of creeping Santaclausism" for offering a tax break for the natural-gas industry (March 6); Clinton "hedged on whether he was giving up on a tax cut for the middle class" (June 19); President Bush "pleaded ignorance" of federal regulations that favored an environmentally harmful form of refining oil (also June 19). One sentence in particular sums up the tenor of the 1992 campaign: "[Perot] continued to insist that he is 'the only guy that talks numbers,' but offered none today" (April 27). Then consider this year's coverage of the Gore campaign. The vice president has faced little policy-related criticism for his shaky claim that Bradley would eliminate Medicare. But he has been endlessly reviled as "boring," "condescending," and the "class prig"—insults typically reserved for intellectuals.

The difference comes through in the buzzwords of each

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race. In 1992, the word dropping from the lips of every candidate and reporter was "specificity," as in the *Post*'s report that "closer examination shows that [Clinton] has provided far more specificity about the programs and tax breaks he would initiate than the ways and means of bringing about savings." ("Specificity is the character issue of 1992," said George Stephanopoulos at the time.) Today the phrase is "authenticity." (*Newsweek*: "Bradley and McCain are hawking this year's hottest commodity: the aura of authenticity—and plain-spoken candor—that comes from a life that starts outside politics.") This is borne out in the coverage by other major news outlets as well, including *The New York Times*, the *Post*, and *Time*. Eight years ago, in articles that mentioned the major presidential contenders, the most influential newspapers and magazines used the words "specific" or "specificity" more than ten times as frequently as "authentic" or "authenticity." In the current election cycle, variations of "authenticity" have occurred almost twice as frequently as "specificity."

THE COUNTRY HAS changed since 1992, and the most obvious difference is its material condition. Eight years ago, America was emerging from a recession, and the populace wanted a president with concrete proposals for improving the standard of living. Today, the ensuing prosperity, along with technological progress and the rise of the stock market, have dulled Americans' expectations of their political leaders. People look mainly to the private sector, not to the government, as the vehicle for improving their lives. Concern for material well-being has been replaced by a concern that modernity has undermined the moral underpinnings of American culture—witness the reaction to the Littleton massacre, in which a large portion of the blame was placed on the Internet and new entertainment technologies. As a result, the president is seen as a moral exemplar and a figure of cultural import rather than as a solver of problems.

All this was evident in the results of a survey conducted last summer by the Pew Research Center. "Science and technology are widely seen as the engines of the century's prosperity," Pew reported. At the same time, "misgivings about America today are focused on the moral climate, with people from all walks of life looking skeptically on the ways in which the country has changed both culturally and spiritually."

The historical precursor to this sentiment appeared in the 1920s. Then, as now, economic growth and innovation served to direct idealism toward the economy. The notion took hold that, as the title of an article popular at the time put it, "Everybody Ought to Be Rich." Some of the euphoria was fueled by the stock market, which prompted stories of humble folk attaining unimaginable wealth. "Edwin Lefèvre told of a broker's valet who had made nearly a quarter of a million in the market, of a trained nurse who cleaned up thirty thousand following the tips given her by grateful patients," writes Frederick Lewis Allen in *Only Yesterday*, "and of a Wyoming cattleman, thirty miles from the nearest railroad, who bought or sold a thousand shares a day—getting his market returns by radio and telephoning his orders to the nearest large town to be transmitted to New York by telegram." Note in particular the last example, which combines both market and technological ebullience. It is a forerunner to a recent TV commercial for an online brokerage firm in which a tow-truck driver, dripping with working-class mannerisms, reveals that online trading has made him wealthy enough to buy his own island.

The economic giddiness of the time palpably deadened interest in government. "The more or less unconscious and unplanned activities of business men," wrote Walter Lippmann, "are for once more novel, more daring, and in general more revolutionary than the theories of the progressives." During such a time, in contrast to the earlier years of the century, the country did not seem to require great and able presidents. William Leuchtenburg recounts, in *The Perils of Prosperity*, the reaction of one Republican senator to the nomination of Warren Harding: "The times, said Connecticut's Senator Brandegee with a shrug, did not require 'first-raters.'"

Likewise, today's material circumstances have given rise to a view that is not so much anti-government as simply bored with government. A Pew poll identifies a new voting block called "New Prosperity Independents"—moderate social liberals who are stock- and Internet-savvy, optimistic about the status quo, and heavily supportive of Bush. This is more of a sensibility than an ideology, and it has no manifesto to define it, probably because none of its adherents has bothered to write one. But the general flavor was caught by Kurt Andersen, writing in *Slate* magazine's Breakfast Table, a chatty e-mail exchange:

> [P]olitics don't and really can't matter all that much in this country right now. There are rough, large consensuses on all the big issues—economics, social welfare, civil rights, women's rights, war and peace, even abortion. And they will continue as long as the economy chugs along like this and we stay out of wars any longer than a mini-series. Sure, there's a biggish, scary lunatic right—the Gary Bauerite creationist anti-gay regiments—but they're not going to be running the country or amending the Constitution anytime soon. In fact, Pat Buchanan is right about the virtual indistinguishability of the Democrats and Republicans. I sympathize with both Buchanan and Warren Beatty viscerally, if not ideologically. I really think national politics kind of needs to be blown up and rebuilt. For the couple weeks seven years ago before he revealed himself to be a horrible, crazy gnome, Ross Perot seemed to me like a great idea. And if next November the candidates are George Bush, Al Gore, and Jesse Ventura, it isn't inconceivable that I would pull the lever for Ventura. And I certainly wouldn't be upset if Bush won, even if he can't name a single book he's ever read.

This small piece of political anthropology embodies many of the stylistic and intellectual tics that are shaping coverage of the presidential race. There is little in the way of substantive philosophy other than the social prejudices of the yuppie class, which holds the simultaneous beliefs that the current arrangement is producing highly satisfactory results and, at the same time, is somehow terribly wrong ("kind of needs to be blown up"). Mostly, yuppies consider politics amusing but fundamentally unimportant, and they prefer leaders who share their unburdened disposition.

But there is another reason for the anti-intellectual turn of

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the political zeitgeist: Bill Clinton. It is most evident in the criticisms of the right, which make clear connections between Clinton's venality and his intellect. On his domestic policies, particularly health care, the right has portrayed Clinton as arrogant and elitist, a central planner plotting with a coterie of utopian academics to impose a new order upon the populace. Regarding his many scandals, he is devious and clever, an evasive Yale lawyer driven by legalisms rather than by basic moral sense.

But this is a minor strain of anti-intellectualism—the anti-intellectualism of a discontented, highly ideological subset. Most of today's anti-intellectualism is rooted in boredom, not anger, and it arises not from a hatred of Clintonism but from an approval of it. The widely remarked-upon irony of Clinton's presidency is that the backlash against him reached its greatest intensity just as his policies attained their popular zenith. Clinton's success in capturing the majority view on all major issues has banished policy from public discourse, leaving only considerations of character, where Clinton fares poorly. The obsession with personal character is rooted in the premise that policy no longer matters.

THIS SENTIMENT HAS been absorbed, more or less unconsciously, by the news media. The pattern in the media loosely tracks the thinking of the general public. Reporters—more than the population at large—sympathize with Clinton's ideology and generally confine their most penetrating inquiries to character-oriented questions. The press, of course, has always covered both the symbolic and the substantive functions of the presidency. But now the scales have tipped far in one direction. Even the most serious newspapers write about the presidency almost as if it were simply a fascinating parade of characters, intrigue, and scandal—culturally meaningful but functionally insignificant.

Richard Ben Cramer's *What It Takes* is the seminal work of the genre. Although the book chronicles the 1988 presidential campaign, it reached the height of its influence, at least among scribblers, in 1996. This is because its most famous section details Bob Dole's ordeal recovering from wounds suffered during World War II. It is gripping and evocative prose, and it inspired countless numbers of Cramer's colleagues to trek to Dole's hometown of Russell, Kansas, in an effort to understand the Republican nominee. The trouble is that, however fascinating it is on a personal level, the tale does not go very far toward explaining what sort of president Dole would have been. Dole entered politics essentially as a blank slate, and his worldview resulted largely from careerism, the Midwestern Republican tradition, and a series of attachments to interest groups—not from anything he learned while fighting in Italy or recovering in a hospital bed.

Nonetheless, the personal account has become the predominant mode of analysis. *The Washington Post*'s David Maraniss, the leading Clinton interpreter, has distinguished himself with a series of extremely long psycho-biographical profiles of powerful politicians, all of whom inevitably come across as marked by childhood traumas, haunted by ghosts of dead parents, and otherwise defined by life events that have nothing to do with their careers in government.

The Cramer-Maraniss genre, while not explicitly anti-intellectual, naturally favors candidates who run on biographical platforms. In fact, it renders candidates who run on platforms of political philosophy practically inexplicable. Consider one particularly illustrative example: a recent profile of Steve Forbes that ran on the front page of the *Post*. The headline—"FORBES REVEALS LITTLE BUT HIS IDEAS"—captures the fundamental assumption. "[Forbes's] book expounds on dismantling the Internal Revenue Service and instituting a flat tax," reports the amazed writer. "But [his] column rarely mentions his family and the book index doesn't list his father, wife, or children." The article goes on in this vein, portraying Forbes's desire to run for president on the basis of what he would do as president as the product of a bizarre personality disorder.

It is true, to be sure, that Forbes's fascination with ideas is not an intellectual passion but the zealotry of a half-educated man. But the *Post* writer does not go anywhere near that far. The story does not even entertain the possibility that Forbes's candidacy stems from a genuine desire to promote supply-side economics—a creed to which he has a long-standing and fanatic devotion. Instead, it pores over the details of Forbes's youth and wonders why Forbes declines to discuss them on the stump. It is tantamount to explaining Karl Marx without mentioning his affinity for communism.

UNDERLYING ALL THIS is an unstated but coherent view of the American president: a symbolic monarch who embodies the national spirit. George Will, in his discourse against intellectualism in politics, writes: "The headmaster of Bush's private secondary school in Houston aspired to give students 'a sense of style,' meaning 'the individual's capacity to attain his goal without wasteful and irrelevant effort.' At Bush's Andover graduation, the headmaster urged graduates to 'take with you a sense of style,' a 'distinction in manner and bearing.'" What Will (along with many other Americans in the post-Clinton age) is really looking for is a president who will make us proud—and do little else. Indeed, the biggest applause line in George W.'s stump speech comes not in response to any policy preference but at the speech's dramatic finale, when he raises his right hand and promises to bring honor to the office of the presidency, "so help me God."

The trouble, of course, is that the American presidency embodies not only the ceremonial role of a head of state but also the functional duties of a prime minister. Current prosperity notwithstanding, there remains work to be done, and problems that will arise. History shows that unless presidential candidates campaign on a pledge to address specific problems, they have great difficulty rallying the people, and their representatives in Congress, to tackle them once in office. It was such ideological campaigning that allowed Reagan to pass his tax cuts in 1981 and Clinton to pass his deficit-reducing budget in 1993. What, by contrast, are candidates elected on the basis of character and personal history empowered to achieve? Nothing much, Americans may respond cheerily, confident that they will have as little need of effective governance tomorrow as they do today. Such are the happy delusions of a contented people. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Fact as Fiction and Vice Versa

ANG LEE CONTINUES his useful demolition. He is shredding the belief, or whatever is left of it, that a director can work well only in an environment that is really familiar to him. After several flavorsome films in his native Taiwan, Lee was chosen—perhaps by an amiable divinity—to direct *Sense and Sensibility*. Jane Austen in the hands of an Asian! Thanks, divinity: the result was exquisite. Then Lee did *The Ice Storm*, set in a modern New York suburb, a film unsuccessful because of its script, but quite at home in its setting. And now the American Civil War.

Ride with the Devil (Universal-USA) is not a conventional blue-and-gray drama. It is set in what was part of the western frontier, the Kansas-Missouri border in 1862, where many units of either Northern or Southern armies were not deployed but where "irregular" groups of sympathizers on both sides fought bloodily. (And sometimes regular troops were involved.) The screenplay, based on a novel by Daniel Woodrell, is by James Schamus, an associate of Lee ever since the director left Taiwan. The first point to note about that script is the dialogue. Schamus has preserved what (I assume) was in Woodrell's book: the locutions of the age, what we might call the Stephen Crane flavor. For me, the language itself, the curls of long-gone but once common phrases, fix the period at least as well as the costumes and the props.

The faces and the bodies are good, too. The Civil War was the first American war caught on camera, and anyone who has looked at photographs by Matthew Brady and others knows that the men seem less like our forebears than like visitors from another planet, snapped during their stay. Men don't stand or slouch or sit that way any more; soldiers don't suggest a belief in gallantry. Lee has caught this unreal reality, the air of bravura amid the amputations and gore.

The film follows two friends, Jake Roedel and Jack Bull Chiles, who join a unit of Bushwhackers (Southerners) to fight Jayhawkers (Northerners). Another in their group is Pitt Mackeson, who dislikes Jake because Jake comes from a German family and German immigrants are predominantly Unionist. Also, just one among history's trillions of contradictions, there is a black man, Daniel Holt, in this pro-slavery unit, there because of loyalty to his owner. Eventually the story's focus is on Jake and his adventures, including his relationship with a young widow named Sue Lee.

But the screenplay has troubles. For all the profusion of skirmishes and battles, the hard riding and harsh confrontations, the story ambles. It never generates driving force or tension. (Even though Quantrill's notorious raid on Lawrence, Kansas, slashes through.) The overall effect is of episodes, each episode of some interest but without much cumulation. The story winds to a kind of conclusion, when all that is left to do is to finish, but it seems a journey rather than an organic drama.

Tobey Maguire as Jake gives the best performance that I have ever seen by an actor who has almost no voice. He squeaks; but he manages to be attractive, even endearing. Skeet Ulrich as Jack Bull has the requisite dash and grit. Sue Lee is played passably by the pop singer Jewel, but without any evidence that she should give up singing. Jeffrey Wright as Daniel keeps his own counsel and does his duty. A burning performance comes from Jonathan Rhys Myers as the malevolent but brave Pitt. His last scene, when he sees the blankness of his future and virtually asks for death, is the film's most trenchant moment. Tom Wilkinson, that sturdy English actor, can be seen moving through some wisps of a role. Possibly he was brought in for a part that was reduced in the editing.

Ang Lee has become an historical action director as surely as he became an Austenite or an expert on modern suburbanites. The most extraordinary aspect of his work here, besides his capacity for sweep in the riding and fighting, is the sense of his complete ease. It makes us think that, for a gifted director, taking on a quite different kind of film may be something like a gifted actor taking on a brand new kind of role. The first thing to be acquired is the right frame of mind. In this view, Lee had first to concentrate on thinking and seeing like an American who understands the story's atmosphere and quiddities. He has done it.

Woody Allen's new film has the one great advantage that any Allen film can have: he isn't in it. He appears from time to time as commentator, but that's all. So there is enjoyment to be had from **Sweet and Lowdown** (Sony Pictures Classics). This film does for a fictitious 1930s jazz guitarist named Emmet Ray what *Zelig* did for Zelig: it treats a dreamed-up character as the subject of a quasi-documentary. Ray, we are told, has the characteristics of a jazz musician of that day—real talent plus wash-and-wear ethics. He likes money, women, and drink; he loves jazz. We see plenty of the former; we hear plenty of the latter.

Sean Penn is Emmet and has learned the fingering of the numbers that he plays. (The actual playing is done by Howard Alden, who is terrific.) As an actor, Penn knows more than fingering. Dressed in 1930s clothes and adorned with a superfluous thin moustache—superfluous for Emmet, that is—Penn has clearly tried to search out any possible period characteristics of movement and gesture. In any case, he has come up with a man full of herky-jerky movements and contradictory basic smoothness of outlook. If we remember Penn's usual taciturn glowerings, we can see how far he has stretched in this part.

At the start, we see Emmet pimping for a couple of hookers, even though he is already a known guitarist. As he travels from place to place, his adventures with women include a long affair with Hattie, a mute laundress, played with (necessarily) silent-film appeal by Samantha Morton. Quite abruptly, Emmet abandons her and subsequently marries the flashy Blanche, played without distinction by Uma Thurman. Meanwhile his career waxes and wanes and waxes, etc., and he makes his rare now-treasured recordings. (All these fabrications are drawn from the biographies of various jazz musicians.) From time to time, as was the cognate case with *Zelig*, we get clips of various experts, including Allen, commenting on the life, or "life," of Emmet. Threading throughout, for further verity, is the fictional guitarist's reverence for the non-fictional guitarist

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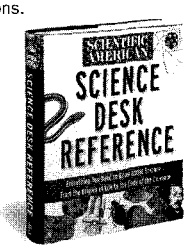

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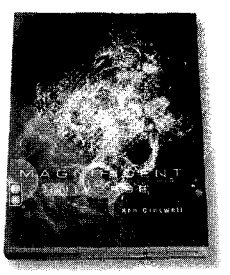

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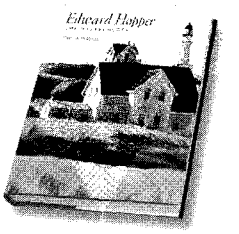

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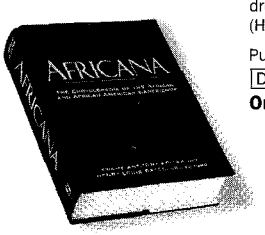

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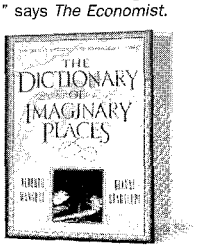

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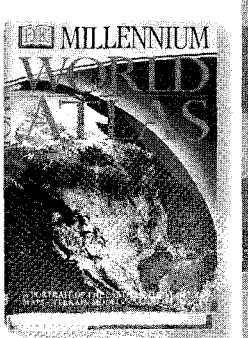

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Django Reinhardt.

It's a simple, unstrained narrative, with no particular point except to present once again the contrast between a jazz musician's character and his music. The difference here is that the jazz man's troubles are not attributed to the blindness and the deafness of society. One question: I wonder how many viewers who won't see press notes will know that Emmet is fictitious. This problem didn't exist with *Zelig*. ■

Where, when, and why 85 million people died.

The Price of an Idea

By MICHAEL SCAMMELL

I.

TWO YEARS AGO the French Chamber of Deputies was thrown into uproar when a member of the center-right Union for French Democracy challenged Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, a Socialist, to justify the presence in his cabinet of three Communist ministers who had failed to repent of their "criminal past." The reason for this challenge was the recent appearance of a scholarly tome called *Le livre noir du communisme*, describing an eighty-year history of Communist "crimes and repression." Despite its enormous length and its great density of detail, the book became a huge commercial success, eventually selling more than 150,000 copies. It also set off an impassioned public debate that roiled the French political and intellectual establishments over many months. It is hard to see such a book—or any book, for that matter—setting off a comparable furor in this country.

The Black Book of Communism, which is finally appearing in English, is an extraordinary and almost unspeakably chilling book. It is a major study that deepens our understanding of communism and poses a philosophical and political challenge that cannot be ignored. The book's central argument, copiously documented and repeated in upwards of a dozen different essays, is that the history of communism should be read above all as the history of an all-out assault on society by a series of conspiratorial cliques led by cruel dictators (Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, Pol Pot, and dozens of imitators) who were murderously drunk on their own ideology and power.

There is also a second argument, formulated by Stéphane Courtois in his introduction and his conclusion, and this is the argument that has provoked so much angry debate. It is that, given the nature and the magnitude of the crimes committed in its name, communism was fully the equal of Nazism as one of the supreme evils of our century. Courtois is not proposing a cheap or unsubstantiated equivalence. He fully understands the enormity of the Nazis' "Final Solution." But he suggests that the Holocaust was not unique, and that the relentless "class genocide" of the Communists, conducted over eight decades, is fully comparable with the "race genocide" of the Nazis. Both were "crimes against humanity" as such horrors were first defined at Nuremberg and later codified by the United Nations.

MICHAEL SCAMMELL is the author of *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (Norton) and is writing a biography of Arthur Koestler.

THE BLACK BOOK OF COMMUNISM: CRIMES, TERROR, REPRESSION
by Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartošek, and Jean-Louis Margolin
translated by Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer
(Harvard University Press, 858 pp., $37.50)

Courtois also undertakes the unpopular but obvious task of doing a body count. The numbers that he comes up with are breathtaking. He counts between 85 and 100 million deaths directly attributable to communism worldwide, extending over a period of 80 years. These astounding figures must be compared with about 25 million deaths for the Nazis over a period of six years.

Aware that he is treading on extremely delicate ground, Courtois cites the great Russian Jewish writer Vassily Grossman in his support. Grossman's mother was killed by the Nazis as part of their war against the Jews, and he was, with Ilya Ehrenburg, one of the editors of *The Black Book* on Nazi crimes against the Jews. (The book was assembled in the Soviet Union in the 1940s, but it was forbidden to be published there; it appeared in Jerusalem three decades later.) Grossman had written about Stalin's liquidation of the kulaks in the 1930s: "To massacre them, it was necessary to proclaim that kulaks are not human beings, just as the Germans proclaimed that Jews are not human beings." And of the killing of the children of kulaks: "That is exactly how the Nazis put the Jewish children into the Nazi gas chambers: 'You are not allowed to live, you are all Jews!'"

COURTOIS CHOOSES HIS words carefully and hedges his argument with all sorts of qualifications, but his comparison caused even more controversy when the book appeared than did its central allegation against communism. It turned out that there had been seventeen pre-publication meetings between Courtois and his fellow authors to discuss the contents of the introduction, and also the book's title. Courtois had wanted to call it *The Book of Communist Crimes*, but his two principal co-authors, Nicolas Werth and Jean-Louis Margolin, persuaded him to change it to *The Black Book of Communism*, which they thought to be a less inflammatory title. (To my mind, it is a stronger and more apposite title.) Werth and Margolin publicly dissociated themselves from Courtois's analogy between communism and Nazism, and accused him of overstating the number of victims, since he preferred the higher figure of "100 million" to the more modest figure of 85 million that they were prepared to endorse.

This quarrel was embarrassing and unfortunate, for it deflected attention from the bulk of the book's contents, and not least from the extremely powerful contributions of Werth himself on the Soviet Union, and of Margolin on China and Cambodia. Worse still, a number of otherwise judicious critics, having got excited about the introduction, were led to dismiss the remaining 800 pages as "old news." We already knew, didn't we, about the atrocities committed by Lenin,

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Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot. They are all dead anyway, and communism has been defeated, so what was the point of bringing this all back? The liberal *Le Monde* even went so far as to call the appearance of *The Black Book* "inopportune," because it would give encouragement to the extreme right in France led by the neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen.

If these critics had taken the trouble to read the book carefully, they would have realized that the proper interpretation of communism is very much a live issue—as the French controversy clearly demonstrated—and that as more and more facts continue to emerge from the Soviet and East European archives (just as they will one day emerge from the archives of China), they are enlarging our understanding of communism in fundamental ways. This is amply borne out by the excellent contributions of Werth and Margolin themselves. Despite their disclaimers, they lend weighty support to Courtois's arguments about the extent of the "genocide" perpetrated by the Communists.

Courtois and his collaborators have performed a signal service by gathering in one volume (for the first time, as far as I am aware) a global history of communism's crimes from the Soviet Union to China, from the satellite countries of Eastern Europe to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and North Korea, and to a lesser degree in Latin America and Africa. In the face of the overwhelming case assembled by these writers, it hardly matters (for the sake of the argument, though not for the individuals concerned) whether the number of victims was 85 million or 100 million. We are facing a monstrous number, unprecedented in recorded history.

II.

THE BLACK BOOK OF COMMUNISM aspires to be encyclopedic in scope. It is divided into five parts, devoted to the Soviet Union, "World Revolution," "The Other Europe," communism in Asia, and the Third World. Not all the parts are of equal interest or of equal value. The section on World Revolution seems somewhat arbitrary, with weak and overly polemical articles on the Comintern and the Spanish Civil War, by Courtois and Jean-Louis Panné, and on communism and terrorism by Rémi Kauffer. The articles on communism in Latin America (by Pascal Fontaine), Afrocommunism (by Yves Santamaria), and communism in Afghanistan (by Sylvain Boulouque) are somewhat perfunctory and largely exploratory in character, as is the article on North Korea (by Pierre Rigoulot) in the Asian section. They do not have the weight of the contributions on Russia, China, and Indochina, and seem to indicate a certain haste or carelessness in the way the final book was put together. Still, as a first attempt to take the full measure of global communism, and to draw up a balance sheet of its crimes worldwide, *The Black Book* is enormously impressive and utterly convincing.

The most novel aspect of this attempt at a "fair and just assessment" of communism from "both the historical and moral viewpoints" lies in what might be described as its "post-Nuremberg" point of view—though communism has never had its Nuremberg. The volume's thesis is that wherever they came into existence, "Communist regimes, in order to consolidate their grip on power, turned mass crime into a full-blown system of government."

It is true, writes Courtois, that most of the crimes committed by the Communists were carried out in accordance with their own laws, but this was also true of Nazism. "The crimes we shall expose are to be judged not by the standards of Communist regimes," he declares, "but by the unwritten code of the natural laws of humanity." The authors adopt a moral stance toward communism that presumes to judge it from the very outset. This, then, is the case for the prosecution. And a very powerful case it is, too.

The rock on which the rest of the book stands is the superb 268-page opening section—a book within a book—by Nicolas Werth, called "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union." Werth begins, unavoidably, with the much mythologized history of the "Year Zero," the year of the October Revolution, noting that "more than eighty years after the event, the battle for control over the story of 1917 continues to rage" (not least, of course, in the pages of this book).

Werth once again rehearses the crucial role played by "the iron fist of the dictatorship of the proletariat," the Petrograd Revolutionary Military Committee, later to become the much-feared secret police known as the Cheka, in gaining the Communists their grip on power. He chronicles the abolition of "bourgeois law" less than three weeks after the start of the Revolution; the introduction of the novel judicial concept of "enemy of the people;" and the merciless calls by Lenin and his Party colleagues for the "liquidation" and the "execution" of all enemies and suspected enemies.

The key to the Bolsheviks' mode of operations, and ultimately to their success, in Werth's account, was their instant readiness to declare war on the rest of society. "War," in this case, was no mere

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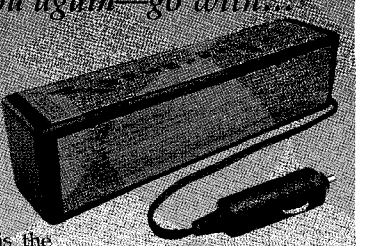

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metaphor. "Do not imagine, comrades, that I am ... looking for a revolutionary form of justice. We have no concern for justice at this hour," said Felix Dzerzhinsky, the first chief of the Cheka, in 1918. "We are at war, on the front where the enemy is advancing, and the fight is to the death." And "to the death" was no metaphor, either. From the very outset, the Bolsheviks announced that "the revolutionary terror of the masses" was their preferred instrument of government, and they did not hesitate to kill without mercy.

After a century of political violence, we have grown so hardened to stories of early revolutionary terror that it is difficult to imagine ourselves back to that more innocent time, or to recapture the horror felt by the population at large when confronted by cold-blooded killings. Werth took it to be his task to refresh our memories. He describes, for example, a "day of Red Terror" organized by the Cheka in Pyatigorsk in the North Caucasus in 1920, when 300 people were taken from their homes and executed as an example to the rest of the population. On the next day, the Cheka moved on to Kislovodsk, where, "for lack of a better idea, it was decided to kill people who were in the hospital."

I read this with a chill of scholarly recognition. This atrocity took place almost two years after Alexander Solzhenitsyn was born in Kislovodsk; and when I was researching his biography, I came across an account of similar executions by an eyewitness named Nikolai Zernov, who later escaped to England. "It is difficult to convey to anyone who hasn't experienced it," wrote Zernov, "the feelings of a man who falls into the category of individuals earmarked for liquidation in the interests of achieving ... the Communist utopia."

In such cases, death was not a punishment for some particular action; it was a consequence of the victim's social origin. The effect of these "sacramental murders," as Zernov called them, on the local population was overwhelming. The victims were murdered as an instrument of intimidation, and in many cases their women and their children were thrown out of their homes and the women turned into prostitutes. The term "sacramental murders" seems to me to rescue brilliantly these assassinations from the abstractions of political discourse and to restore their real meaning.

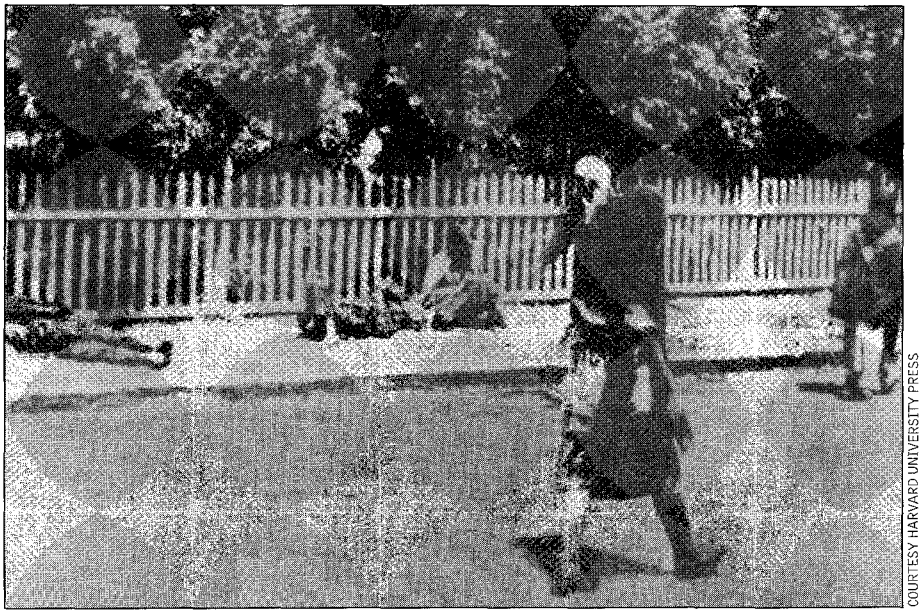
Werth describes the steadily widening ripples of these murderous policies with fearful precision, from the proclamation of "War Communism"—"we are now at war, and it is only with guns that we will get the grain we need," said Trotsky in 1918—through the Red Terror—"Hang (I mean hang publicly, so that people see it) at least 100 kulaks, rich bastards, and known bloodsuckers.... Single out the hostages per my telegram," said Lenin later in the same year—to the suppression of the Kronstadt workers' revolt in 1921 and the slaughter of 5,000 strikers in Astrakhan. As Werth writes: "When the prisons were full, the soldiers and strikers were loaded onto barges and then thrown by the hundreds into the Volga with stones tied around their necks."

It is true that many of these atrocities were known before, but Werth presents the reader with a suffocating torrent of fresh evidence (including the story of the Astrakhan strikers) from the newly opened Soviet archives, where we find striking evidence of the revolutionaries condemning themselves out of their own mouths. Here are excerpts from three reports, not by enemies but by Communist officials of the time:

> I have checked up on the events surrounding the kulak uprising in the Novo-Matryonskaya *volost*. The interrogations were carried out in a totally chaotic manner. Seventy-five people were tortured, but is impossible to make head or tail of any of the written reports.... The local Cheka leader [said]: We didn't have time to write the reports at the time. What does it matter anyway when we are trying to wipe out the bourgeoisie and the kulaks as a class?
>
> The Cheka are looting and arresting everyone indiscriminately. Safe in the knowledge that they cannot be punished, they have transformed the Cheka headquarters into a huge brothel where they take all the bourgeois women. Drunkenness is rife. Cocaine is being used quite widely among the supervisors.
>
> It is impossible to get any clear idea of who was shot or why.... Orgies and drunkenness are daily occurrences. Almost all the personnel of the Cheka are heavy cocaine users. They say this helps them deal with the sight of so much blood on a daily basis. Drunk with blood and violence, the Cheka is doing its duty....

It has been argued that such excesses were the consequence mainly of the Civil War, and it is true that the Bolsheviks were involved in a real civil war by the time these reports were filed in 1919. But it was a war provoked by their own excesses; and those excesses by no means ended with the end of the war. Quite the contrary. The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the spring of 1921—the same policy that we were once taught to regard as a relaxation of the regime—was accompanied by a renewed drive against the Bolsheviks' socialist allies, ordered by the vitriolic Lenin: "If the Mensheviks or Socialist Revolutionaries so much as peek out again, they must all be shot without pity." That same spring, General Mikhail Tukhachevsky began gassing and shooting peasant rebels in Tambov province, and by the summer of 1921 at least seven concentration camps had been established.

At the center of this orgy of killing was the cold and calculating figure of Lenin, and not the least of Werth's services is the fresh scrutiny that he brings to the personality of this vicious and enigmatic



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Stalin's famine in Kharkiv, the Ukraine, 1933

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leader. Solzhenitsyn was the first in recent times to draw attention to Lenin's role not just as the arch-begetter of the Revolution, but also as the figure who set the bloodthirsty parameters for the dictatorship of Stalin. Collectivization, famine in the Ukraine, the Great Terror of 1937-1939, the establishment of the huge network of the Gulag, the annexation of parts of East and Central Europe and the occupation of half a dozen countries there: all these "achievements" of Stalin were made possible by Lenin; and there were none, it seems, from which he would have flinched, had he lived.

Helped by the new archival revelations, Werth lays to rest once and for all the myth of the "good" Lenin versus the "bad" Stalin. And as *The Black Book* shows, Lenin blazed a path of tyranny and bloodshed not only for Stalin, but also for Mao, Ho Chi-Minh, Pol Pot, and a century's worth of psychopaths at every level of the Communist chain of command, from dictators to bureaucrats.

THE "EUROPEAN" PART of *The Black Book* is completed by two essays on Central and Eastern Europe: "Poland, the 'Enemy Nation'" by Andrzej Paczkowski, and "Central South-Eastern Europe" by Karel Bartošek. Packowski's piece is a rather sketchy survey of the five waves of repression to which Poland was subjected by its Communist rulers, but it is notable for its detailed bibliography, which emphasizes just how much new work has been done since 1989. (The inclusion of bibliographies with some essays and not with others also seems to point to the somewhat improvisatory nature of the volume as a whole.)

Bartošek's contribution is more substantial. He points out how seamlessly the organized violence of the Nazis in World War II gave way to the organized violence of the Red Army, followed by SMERSH and the NKVD, as they moved into East Europe when the Nazis retreated. They in turn were replaced by homegrown Communist police and soldiers who enthusiastically embraced the Bolshevik model of violence and repression. The Czechs, the Slovaks, the Hungarians, the Romanians, the Bulgarians, and the peoples of the former Yugoslavia were all forced to endure a new purgatory after the horrors of the World War. Bartošek adds to that list the plight of the "forgotten" Germans. More than six million Germans were forced to leave Silesia and Pomerania after the latter provinces had been given to Poland; three million were expelled from Czechoslovakia; hundreds of thousands were forced out of Hungary and Yugoslavia; and further repressions were inflicted on the inhabitants of the "people's democracy" of East Germany.

Bartošek shows the many ways in which the satellite countries recapitulated the much longer experience of the Soviet Union, applying the methods that Stalin distilled and refined from Leninist principles. Their example throws new light on the original Soviet model—underlining such dark realities as the economic function of the Gulag; the role increasingly played by anti-Semitism after World War II; the "infernal pedagogy" (Annie Kriegel's term), whereby the most prominent anti-fascist fighters of the interwar years were among the first victims of the communist regimes; and the importance of the show trials, as the Communist Party in each country began to devour its own.

Among the fascinating new insights provided by Bartošek is a glimpse of the inner mechanism of the show trials derived from an interview with the Czech Catholic intellectual Bedřich Fučik. It is well known that most of the sensational confessions made at these trials, in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, were induced by torture, but ever since Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* there has been much debate over the psychological processes involved. Fučik confirmed to Bartošek that he had been tortured, but the worst part of the interrogation, he said, was the impact on his personality.

> The one thing I'll never forget, the most horrible thing that will never leave me, is the way that suddenly there are two people inside you, two different men. The first one, me, the person I had always been, and me, the second one, the new one who says to the old one, "you're a criminal, you did such and such. . . ." The first one fights back, and an argument follows between these two people, it's like a total doubling of the personality, the one relentlessly humiliating the other. "You're lying! It's not true!" And the other saying: "Yeah, okay, it's true, I did do it, I signed, etc."

This comes extraordinarily close to Koestler's re-creation of a Soviet show trial, and to the mental breakdown of his hero Rubashov—though Koestler was not as aware of the role of physical torture in Stalin's jails as we are now. But the extraordinary thing is that Fučik was a Catholic, not a Communist. He had no reason to "serve" the Party as Rubashov did; and yet the effect on his personality and his behavior was almost identical.

III.

THE DISCUSSION OF communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe takes up just over two-thirds of *The Black Book*. The last third of the volume is devoted to communism in East Asia and the Third World, including three notable essays on China and Indochina by Jean-Louis Margolin. Margolin remarks upon several differences between Asian and European communism: the Asian regimes (with the exception of North Korea) all came to power through their own efforts; and all, with the partial exception of Cambodia, are still in power; and all still maintain censorship and keep their archives closed, so that much less information is available about these dictatorships than about the Soviet Union and Europe.

Still, by means of a close analysis of available sources, Margolin easily establishes the essential continuity between these regimes and their European counterparts, especially in the matter of violence and repression. In the case of China, the figures are mind-boggling. It is quite clear, writes Margolin, that "Communist actions" during the first twenty years of the Party's existence resulted in "between 6 million and 10 million deaths," not counting the civil war with the Kuomintang, which ended in 1949. Later, after the Communists came to power, "tens of millions of 'counterrevolutionaries'" spent long periods of their lives in prisons or camps, "with perhaps 20 million dying there." And to that should be added the deaths caused by the Great Leap Forward: "estimates range from 20 million to 43 million dead for the years 1951-1961," plus "10 to 20 percent of the inhabitants of Tibet." (The latter certainly amounts to genocide in the strict sense of the term.) Margolin sardonically cites the "genuine surprise" of Deng Xiaoping at world reaction to the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989, where "only" 1,000 people died. This, said Deng revealingly, was utterly insignificant compared with the events of the recent past.

Margolin emphasizes how heavily Chinese communism, founded in the 1920s, was influenced by the military dimension of the Bolshevik example. For the Chinese, "Bolshevism was an intermediary means linked to a strategy for seizing power and reenforcing a national revolutionary state." Wherever it triumphed, it was "the socialism of the barracks, of courts-martial, and of firing squads that took power." Margolin also points out that a Chinese purge of 186,000 victims in the province of Jiangxi in 1927-1931 preceded Stalin's Great Terror, proving that they had drawn similar conclusions from Lenin's example.

Margolin then lists the long series of the Chinese Communists' massacres and persecutions of their own population, from the first collectivization of 1946-

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1949 ("between 2 million and 5 million dead," "6 million... sent to the *laogai*, or labor camps), to the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 ("between 1 million and 3 million" dead), not to mention the shootings in Tiananmen Square. Along the way Margolin devotes special attention to Tibet, whose losses are virtually impossible to estimate, but where Tibetans, in the words of the Dalai Lama, "not only were shot, but also were beaten to death, crucified, burned alive, drowned, mutilated, starved, strangled, hanged, boiled alive, buried alive, drawn and quartered, and beheaded."

In terms of scale and sheer brutality, pride of place (if that is the right expression) must go to the so-called Great Leap Forward: "between twenty million and 43 million" dead. The Great Leap, which was launched in 1959, was the cause of "quite possibly the worst famine not only in the history of China but also in the history of the world." Its implementation, as Margolin describes it, was unbelievably horrible.

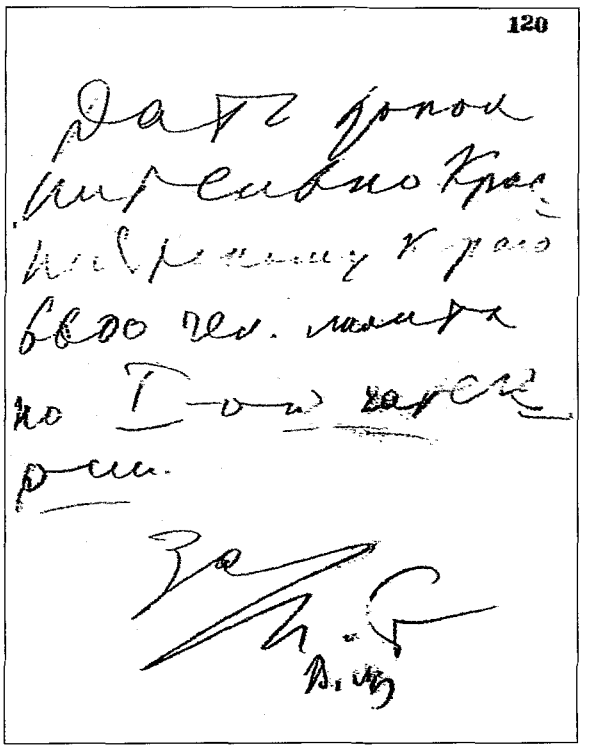
> The order was given to smash all privately owned cutlery that had not yet been turned to steel to prevent people from being able to feed themselves by pilfering the food supply of the commune.... The excesses of repression were terrifying. Thousands of detainees were systematically tortured, and children were killed and even boiled and used as fertilizer—at the very moment when a nationwide campaign was telling people to "learn the Henan way...." In Henan and elsewhere there were many cases of cannibalism... children were sometimes eaten as a communal decision.

Margolin also cites Wei Jingsheng, who as an eighteen-year-old Red Guard took refuge in the province of Anhui eight years after the Great Leap Forward. Wei was shown an abandoned village, engulfed in weeds, whose entire population had been wiped out or deported.

> Before my eyes, among the weeds, rose up one of the scenes I had been told about, one of the banquets at which the families had swapped children in order to eat them. I could see the worried faces of the families as they chewed the flesh of other people's children.... I felt sorry for the children, but not as sorry as I felt for the parents. What had made them swallow that human flesh, amidst the tears and grief of other parents—flesh that they would never have imagined tasting, even in their worst nightmares?

Wei continues: "In that moment I understood what a butcher he had been, the man 'whose like humanity has not seen in several centuries, and China not in several thousand years'." (His reference is to Lin Biao's sycophantic description of Mao in 1966.)

Margolin is clear about the centrality of Mao to the carnage in China. While not devoting as much attention to the Chinese Party leader as Werth devotes to Lenin, he underlines the "Red Emperor's" essentially evil nature: "his unpredictable character, his ferocious egotism, the vindictive murders he committed, and the life of debauchery that he led right up to the end." Mao was at the heart of the Party's every excess, from 1927 until his death in 1976, and was personally responsible for the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.



An execution order signed by Stalin during the Great Terror, condemning 6,600 people

So much for the theories of Marx (and Tolstoy) that history is ruled by impersonal forces, not by individuals. You have to read Nietzsche and Dostoevsky to understand the likes of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and the rest of the "supermen" that make up their twentieth century progeny, but not even those great dystopian writers could have predicted the insane policies of the Cambodian leader Pol Pot. Margolin's long essay on Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge is the most eloquent in the entire book, as this opening paragraph demonstrates.

> The lineage from Mao Zedong to Pol Pot is obvious.... The Cambodian tyrant was incontestably mediocre and a pale copy of the imaginative and cultivated Beijing autocrat who with no outside help established a regime that continues to thrive in the world's most populous country. Yet despite Pol Pot's limitations, it is the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward that look like mere trial runs... for what was perhaps the most radical social transformation of all: the attempt to implement total Communism in one fell swoop, without the long transitional period that seemed to be one of the tenets of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Money was abolished in a week; total collectivization was achieved in less than two years; social distinctions were suppressed by the elimination of entire classes of property owners, intellectuals, and businessmen; and the ancient antagonism between urban and rural areas was solved by emptying the cities in a single week. It seemed that the only thing needed was sufficient willpower, and heaven would be found on Earth. Pol Pot believed that he would be enthroned higher than his glorious ancestors—Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong—and that the revolution of the twenty-first century would be conducted in Khmer, just as the revolutions of the twentieth century had been in Russian and then Chinese.

Thanks to the success of *The Killing Fields*, the American public has a more vivid and realistic picture of the dire results of the Cambodian experiment than of any other Communist revolution. Like their predecessors, the Khmer Rouge had to foment a civil war and then win it, which they did, with the help of the North Vietnamese, in 1975. The subsequent emptying of the cities put millions of people literally "on the road:" according to Margolin, close to fifty percent of the population was on the move at the height of the process. The evacuation itself was accomplished largely without brutality. It was only when the Khmer Rouge started to classify the population into poor and rich, to proletarianize the former city dwellers, and to deport thousands of people to different regions of the country up to three or four times, that the death toll began to climb.

One brutal paradox, given the regime's pious declarations of its desire for social welfare, was the deliberate elimination of the weak, the sick, and the infirm. Then came "a mania for the classification and elimination of different elements of soci-

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ety," that led first to a purge of the Party itself, and then to a horrendous winnowing of all sectors of society. After a brief rebellion in the region bordering Vietnam, for example, the Khmer Rouge condemned the entire population of the region to death. Fortunately they succeeded in killing off "only" a quarter of a million of the inhabitants. In other assaults, the Khmer Rouge killed between 40 and 50 percent of the Chinese population of Cambodia, 38 percent of the Vietnamese, 50 percent of the Catholic population, and between 40 and 50 percent of the Muslim Cham minority. (The latter is another example of genocide in the strict sense of the term.)

MARGOLIN IS CAUTIOUS when it comes to the numbers of the dead in Cambodia. He cites an exhaustive variety of sources for estimates, noting that "everyone has an interest in stretching the figure in one direction or another." Suggested figures range from about 750,000 to three million; but the true numbers are still unknowable given the absence of precise data, and Margolin settles ultimately for a provisional figure of about a million.

It is a huge number, out of an original population of about seven million; but as Margolin correctly observes, "horror is not always a matter of numbers." The full list of Cambodia's horrors compels a morbid fascination. To live in revolutionary Cambodia was to enter a "nightmare world on the other side of the mirror." The first article of faith was that life was dispensable. "Losing you is not a loss, and keeping you is no specific gain," ran one official slogan. The condition of the former city-dwellers was "halfway between being a beast of burden and a war slave." All writing, all education, all medicine, all freedom of movement, and all religion disappeared. There were strict codes for dress and behavior. No public displays of affection, no arguments, no complaints, and no tears were allowed. All figures of authority were to be blindly obeyed.

It hardly comes as a surprise this late in the book to read that the worst result of the Khmer Rouge regime was the deep and enduring famine brought about (as in Russia and China) by Communist ignorance, arrogance, and misrule. Margolin's account becomes almost surreal. Cannibalism, he writes, was "perhaps less widespread than during the Great Leap Forward in China," but was common enough to be a huge problem. One teacher ate her sister; the inmates of a hospital ward ate a young man. A Khmer Rouge deserter was forced to eat his own ears before being killed.

> There are also many stories about the eating of human livers.... Haing Ngor describes how in one prison the fetus, liver, and breasts of a pregnant woman who had been executed were treated; the child was simply thrown away (others had already been hung from the ceiling to dry), the rest was carried away with cries of "That's enough meat for tonight!" Ken Khun tells of a cook in a cooperative who prepared an eye remedy from human gall bladders (which he shared out quite liberally to his bosses) and who praised the tastiness of human liver.

A question arises. Was Cambodian communism "an extreme and aberrant case," a national Cambodian movement that differed radically from all other forms of communism, or was it "a grotesque but revealing caricature of certain fundamental traits" of communism itself? Margolin poses the question at the start of his essay, and by the end of his discussion he is ready to commit himself to some conclusions. It is true, he writes, that the Cambodian Communists were marked by an extreme form of nationalism, which was very much in the tradition of Sihanouk and Lon Nol, the rulers who immediately preceded them; and he grants a limited validity to the view that "Polpotist violence grew out of the brutality of the Sihanoukists." He cites Buddhist quietism and a wider tradition of violence in Indochina as also playing a role. Yet Margolin leaves no room to doubt that "the ideological foundations and the political ends of the Khmer Rouge were never a reaction to Sihanouk, but were instead part of the great tradition of Leninism found in the successive figures of Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Ho Chi Minh."

Was the Pol Pot regime, then, "some sort of red fascism that was thinly disguised as Communism"? Margolin replies that the Cambodian Communist Party certainly had its own peculiarities, "but so did Poland and Albania." Cambodian communism was "closer to Chinese Communism than Chinese Communism was to the Russian version," but it was communism just the same.

Similar questions to these have been posed about other Communist movements. Apologists for Russian communism long held that it was, among other things, a legitimate reaction to the cruelties of tsarism, just as Chinese supporters cited the civil war against the Kuomintang as a justification for the violence of the Communists. As *The Black Book* demonstrates, however, the Russian Communists had killed more of their fellow citizens within weeks of the Bolshevik coup than the tsars had managed in the entire preceding century; and the violence of Mao and his forces far exceeded that of his opponent Chiang Kai-shek (and began well before the struggle with Chiang).

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There is another extenuating argument which holds that, since a majority of Communist regimes came to power as a result of civil war, or immediately after a larger conflict like the First and Second World Wars, the revolutionary violence grew out of a generalized experience of violence at the time. Werth and Margolin (and the other contributors to the book) acknowledge the temporary influence of such factors, as well as the deadening effect of the losses incurred in war; but as Margolin properly notes, only a fraction of the war victims were killed in cold blood, and as the result of a deliberate policy decision.

There is also a school of thought that looks to national traditions of violence to explain Communist excesses. Certainly there is no shortage of such traditions in any nation's history, but again the element of motive and intention is the decisive factor. Most nations can point to periods of amity and peace to balance the violent episodes. Finally it is ideology that determines the predominance of one tradition over another.

IV.

THE BLACK BOOK is curiously "un-French" and refreshingly direct in the way its authors stick to recorded facts and avoid abstract theories. Indeed, the caution with which Werth and Margolin, the two principal writers, advance their arguments and express their tentative conclusions strikes me as somewhat excessive, given the vivid and eloquent narratives that precede them. Werth writes, too modestly, that "all" that he has done is synthesize existing studies with the new archival discoveries, so as to demonstrate that "cycles of violence lie at the heart of the social history of the Soviet Union" rather than being peripheral to it. His work is but a first step, he writes, and "many gray areas remain." Margolin similarly peppers his narrative with phrases such as "needs more serious study" and "more work needs to be done," though, unlike Werth, he does permit himself a brief chapter of "conclusions."

This scholarly caution probably accounts for their reservations about Courtois's introduction, but what one misses in their chapters is precisely the dimension of interpretation. It is fortunate, then, that after their exhaustive treatments of the "how" of Communist successes, Courtois examines the "why," in his penetrating and closely argued conclusion.

Courtois begins with the obligatory connection to the French Revolution, and especially to the Terror, which the late François Furet—who is the spiritual father of *The Black Book*—once characterized as "government by fear, which Robespierre theorized as government by virtue. Invented to destroy the aristocracy, it soon became a means to dispose of the wicked and combat crime ... terror became the means by which revolution, the history yet to be created, would forge the new human beings of the future." No wonder Lenin looked to the French Revolution to provide legitimacy for his own. It had everything that he needed.

And just as important to the formation of the Bolshevik mentality as the European revolutionary tradition was Russia's homegrown tradition of revolutionary terrorism. It was most perfectly personified by the late-nineteenth-century nihilist Sergei Nechayev, who described the ideal revolutionary as "an implacable enemy" of the entire world of civilization, who "continues to live only to be able to ensure the destruction of society." Lenin's achievement was to weld these two traditions together. He expanded them to encompass the idea of civil war as "a permanent form of political struggle," and

Who Will Remember the Rememberers?

1
Verses for Memorial Day, a psalm of remembering
for the war dead. The generation of memory-veterans
is dying out. Half at a ripe old age, half at a rotten old age.
And who will remember the rememberers?

2
How does a monument come into being? A car goes up in a red flame
at Sha'ar Hagay. A car burnt black. The skeleton of a car.
And next to it, the skeleton of some other car, charred in a traffic accident
on some other road. The skeletons are painted with anti-rust paint, red
like the red of that flame. Near one skeleton, a wreath of flowers,
now dry. From dry flowers you make a memorial wreath,
and from dry bones, a vision of resurrected bones.
And somewhere else, far away, hidden among the bushes,
a cracked marble plaque with names on it. An oleander branch,
like a shock of hair on a beloved face, hides most of them.
But once a year the branch is cut back and the names are read,
while up above, a flag at half-mast waves as cheerfully
as a flag at the top of the flagpole, light and easy,
happy with its colors and breezes.
And who will remember the rememberers?

3
What is the correct way to stand at a memorial ceremony?
Erect or stooped, pulled taut as a tent or in the slack casual posture
of mourning, head bowed like the guilty or held high
in a demonstration against death,
eyes gaping frozen like the eyes of the dead
or shut tight, to see stars inside.
And what is the best time for remembering? At noon
when shadows are hidden beneath our feet, or at twilight
when shadows lengthen like longings
that have no beginning, no end, like God?

4
And what should our lament be? David's lament over Saul and Jonathan:
"Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions," that is what our lament should be.

Had they really been swifter than eagles
they would have flown high above the war
and would not have been hurt. From down here, we would have seen them
and said: "There go the eagles! There is my son, my husband, my brother."

And had they really been stronger than lions
they would have stayed like lions, not died like human beings.
They would have eaten out of our hands,

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we would have stroked their golden manes,
we would have tamed them in our homes, with love:
My son, my husband, my brother, my husband, my son.

5
No one has ever heard of the fruit of the jasmine,
no poet has sung its praises,
they all sing drunken odes to the jasmine flower,
its heady scent, its color, white against dark leaves,
the vigor of its blossoming and the force of its short life—
a butterfly's life or the life of a star.
No one has ever heard of the fruit of the jasmine.
And who will remember the rememberers?

6
No one praises the blossoms of the vine, everyone praises
the fruit of the vine, and blesses the wine.
Have I mentioned that my father, in the wisdom of his hands,
knew how to prepare parcels for transport,
packed tight and sealed tight
so they wouldn't come undone along the way like me?
So much death in everything, so much packing and transport,
so much open that will never close again, so much closed
that will never open.

7
Seeking roots in the Warsaw cemetery.
Here it is the roots that are seeking. They burst
from the ground, overturn gravestones,
and clasp the broken fragments in search
of names and dates, in search
of what was and will never be again.
The roots are seeking their trees that were burned to the ground.

8
And who will remember? And what do you use to preserve memory?
How do you preserve anything in this world?
You preserve it with salt and with sugar, high heat and deep-freeze,
vacuum-sealers, dehydrators, mummifiers.
But the best way to preserve memory is to conserve it inside forgetting
so not even a single act of remembering will seep in
and disturb memory's eternal rest.

Yehuda Amichai

—translated by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

through the sheer force of his "utopian will," and of course with the help of his revolutionary colleagues, he imposed his ideology on a feeble Russia. Unlike the French Terror, the Russian terror was directed against all strata of society; and after ten weeks Lenin's rule had lasted longer than the Paris Commune.

It was Karl Kautsky, the German socialist and Lenin's ideological rival, who as early as 1918 in *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* outlined the consequences of Lenin's doctrine for socialism, and the way in which Lenin's version differed from his own democratic socialism. Both movements had the same end in view, Kautsky observed, which was "to free the proletariat, and with it humanity, through socialism." But the democratic socialists called for the fullest possible discussions in the context of free inquiry. The Bolsheviks, by contrast, called for a dictatorship of the proletariat: "Dictatorships don't ask for the refutation of contrary views, but forcibly suppress their utterance." Kautsky even expressed the "heretical" view that socialism was not a shibboleth. "Should it be proved to us that ... somehow the emancipation of the proletariat and of humanity could be achieved solely on the basis of private property, we would discard socialism without in any way giving up our objective."

Nothing better illustrates the distance between democratic socialism and Lenin's "socialism" than this statement by Kautsky, as Lenin confirmed in an article of rebuttal called *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. It was a classic statement of Communist theory that was conveniently forgotten in later times. "In reality," wrote Lenin, "the state is nothing but a machine for the suppression of one class by another ... Dictatorship is rule based directly on force and unrestricted by any laws. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained through the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws." The consequence of this doctrine was endless civil war. The more a minority dictatorship was forced to rely on the army, the more it drove the opposition to meet violence with violence, so that, as Kautsky predicted, civil war became "a method of adjusting political and social antagonisms."

While Lenin was the prime progenitor of the Communist doctrine of lawlessness and violence, he did not lack for bloodthirsty allies. Writing of the "bourgeoisie" in 1919, Trotsky proclaimed: "We are forced to tear off this class and chop it away. The Red Terror is a weapon used against a class that, despite being doomed to destruction, does not wish to perish." After twelve years of such chopping, Gorky could still speak of the Communists as being involved in a civil war, and conclude that "if the enemies do not surrender, it is up to us to exterminate them." And between Trotsky and Gorky, a whole army of choppers and exterminators had been at work for over a decade.

LENIN'S GREAT GENIUS, of course, was for ideology, which was redefined all too often to support the tactical requirements of the moment. But owing to his fanatical conviction of his own righteousness, especially where socialism was concerned, and also to the Promethean force of his will, his pronouncements were enshrined by his followers as universal truths. After Lenin had spoken, it was possible only to produce exegeses and variations on his words, but it was not possible to question them. As Courtois notes, "ideology was transformed into dogma," a phenomenon that had its roots deep in Russian belief systems and Russian history. At the same

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time there was a peculiarly twentieth-century dimension to this dogma, for it was avowedly atheist in character, and could not appeal to any transcendental authority. For religious truth it substituted "scientific" truth, and claimed to be conforming to the iron laws of progress, as pre-determined by "scientific" theory.

The allegedly "scientific" basis of communism had dire consequences. Courtois cites Cornelius Castoriadis's formulation of the disaster: "If there is one true theory in history, if there is rationality at work in things, then it is clear that its development should be entrusted to specialists in that theory." The "absolute power" of the Party attained a philosophical status, and if its materialist interpretation of history's laws was true, its power had to be absolute. The Party claimed to answer only to science, and science justified terror, since human life had to be made to conform with its laws.

The problem was that these "scientific laws" were a chimera. From the very outset there was a yawning gap between reality and Communist theory. This was overcome through the appropriation of symbols and the distortion of language. One such symbol was that of the proletariat, which, as Lenin himself admitted, barely existed in the Russia of 1917, but in whose name he claimed to exercise a dictatorship. The terms "bourgeois" and "counterrevolutionary" were equally symbolic entities that were so elastic and so changeable that they could mean anything at all; and they were used to denote virtually anyone whom the Communists regarded as an enemy (including workers and peasants, when necessary).

The deformation of language proceeded in two directions. First, it led to a high degree of abstraction. What took place in Communist societies was not the murder or the torture of innocent men, women, and children by thugs and sadists, not the theft of their belongings by criminals and recidivists, and not their incarceration in prisons and labor camps; what took place was their "liquidation" by representatives of the "proletariat," and the "appropriation" of their ill-gotten gains by the "lower classes," and their "re-education" in "penal institutions."

Along with this abstraction went another kind of abstraction, in the form of a systematic dehumanization of opponents. Again it was Lenin who set the tone. His letters and his instructions to subordinates were full of de-humanizing invective: opponents were "bloodsuckers," "rich bastards," "scum." Kirov, later to become the Party Chief of Leningrad, referred to the "White Guard lice" fighting in the civil war. Strikers were "noxious yellow parasites," and when they were arrested, were forced to sign confessions of guilt referring to themselves as "filthy, criminal dogs." (The Chinese later developed their own version of this epithet with the "running dogs of capitalism.") Andrei Vyshinsky, Stalin's infamous public prosecutor at the show trials of the 1930s, was the master of this oratorical tradition.

A historian, Chien Po-tsan, is handed to the mob during the Cultural Revolution, China, 1966

> Shoot these rabid dogs! Death to this gang who hide their ferocious teeth, their eagle claws, from the people! Down with that vulture Trotsky, from whose mouth a bloody venom drips, putrefying the great ideals of Marxism! Let's put these liars out of harm's way, these miserable pygmies who dare to dance around rotting carcasses! Down with these abject animals! Let us put an end once and for all to these miserable hybrids of foxes and pigs, these stinking corpses! Let their horrible squeals finally come to an end! Let's exterminate the mad dogs of capitalism, who want to tear to pieces the flower of our new Soviet nation! Let's push the bestial hatred they bear our leaders back down their own throats!

The "animalization of the adversary," as Courtois calls it, treated the enemy literally as prey to be hunted and shot; and he cites Alain Brossat in support of his view that communism was closer to Nazism than even the post-war theorists of totalitarianism have thought. Brossat sees in the "liquidations" of the Soviet punitive organs a close parallel to the "treatment" administered by Nazi leaders, and in the animalization of "the Other" a mirror of the Nazis' obsession with cleanliness and contagion, even if the "implacably hierarchical" ideology of the Nazis was concerned with race, whereas for the Communists the agent of history was class.

Taking this line of thought a step further, Courtois espies in communism a "sociopolitical eugenics," a form of social Darwinism that was the exact opposite of what the Communists claimed to propagate. "Once a decision had been made on a 'scientific' basis that the bourgeoisie represented a stage of humanity that had been surpassed, its liquidation as a class, and the liquidation of the individuals who actually or supposedly belonged to it, could be justified." The idea that the proletariat was the bearer of the meaning of history, Courtois continues, stemmed from "a millenarian cosmological planetary phantasmagoria" that was to be found in Nazism as well, and resulted in "crimes against humanity" that were just as serious as anything perpetrated by the Nazis.

> Critics have often tried to make a distinction between Nazism and Communism by arguing that the Nazi project had a particular aim, which was nationalist and racist in the extreme, whereas Lenin's project was universal. This is entirely wrong. In both theory and practice, Lenin and his successors excluded from humanity all capitalists, the bourgeoisie, counterrevolutionaries, and others, turning them into absolute enemies in their sociological and political discourse . . . . These were the terms that led directly to crimes against humanity.

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And so *The Black Book* comes full circle, and ends where it began: with the analogy between communism and Nazism, and the claim for the moral and historical parity of these two evils.

V.

Is Courtois right? It is certainly possible to sympathize with his position. He is profoundly revolted by the unspeakable crimes of communism, and deeply disturbed by what he sees as their comparative neglect compared with those of the Nazis. But the implied rebuke to Holocaust historians and to the public at large for their preoccupation with fascism seems excessive, as is the hint that the Holocaust is taking up too much of our moral indignation, so that there is insufficient room left for a proportionate indignation over communism. Courtois and his colleagues are right to wish to generate a similar passion about communism, but they should take heart from the example of the Holocaust, rather than be discouraged by it; the seemingly exhaustive (but in reality inexhaustible) study of the Holocaust has, if anything, shown us the way. We cannot choose between our memory of Auschwitz and our memory of the Gulag, because history has mandated that we remember them both.

As Martin Malia points out in his excellent foreword to *The Black Book*, there is an element of French political jousting in Courtois's position, as in the response of his critics. French intellectual life of the past six decades has been dominated by a left notable for its love of theory and, with honorable exceptions, its infatuation with communism. For most French leftists—as for the Communists themselves during and after World War II—fascism was an ideological godsend. The enemy of their enemy was their friend, and how could you attack a friend? This attitude was not exclusive to France. It accounted also for the difficulties that Orwell experienced in finding an English publisher for *Animal Farm*.

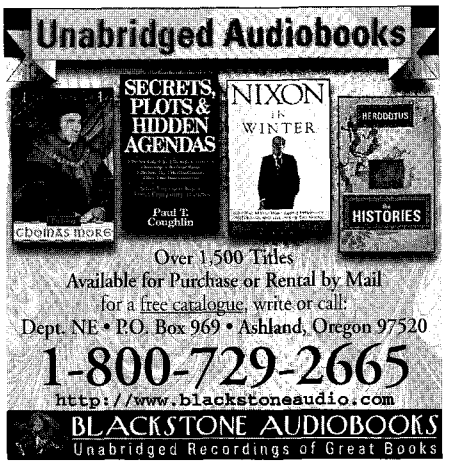
It is true that the Holocaust has become the symbol of ultimate human evil, the universal standard by which to judge other evils, with the result that the term "genocide" is routinely appropriated to describe the situation of persecuted peoples everywhere, from the Armenians at the beginning of the century to the Rwandans and the Kosovars of very recent memory. Is such an appropriation justified? Many think not, leading to a lingering suspicion that perhaps Courtois is engaged in a similar sort of appropriation.

This is a pity, because ultimately this competition for primacy in the contemporary moral imagination is morbid and meaningless. What matters is that we understand the *entirety* of this century's terrible history. We already understand, or think we understand, the crimes of the Nazis; and it is equally our duty to grasp the fact that, as Malia puts it, "the Communist regimes did not just commit criminal acts (all states do on occasion); they were criminal enterprises in their very essence: on principle, so to speak, they all ruled lawlessly, by violence, and without regard for human life." As a civilization, we are obliged to come to terms with that truth, and admit our share of culpability, and draw the correct conclusions.

Courtois's frustration stems from his sense that the world has still not come to grips with the full enormity of communism's crimes, and especially not with the fact that these crimes constituted "crimes against humanity" in the Nuremberg sense of the term. He further fears, I suspect, that with the astoundingly peaceful collapse of communism, and the shortness of people's memories, there is a danger of these crimes being forgotten before a proper accounting can be made. Not the least of the services that *The Black Book* performs is to remind us how astonishingly slow and reluctant the West was to recognize the true nature of communism. Not at the time of its birth, to be sure: the French, British, and Czechs sent expeditionary forces to strangle the infant monster in its cradle. But it is shocking to contemplate how long it took for the proper understanding to return.

A good deal of the power of *The Black Book* is owed to the newly opened archives of the former Communist states and the many studies that they have generated; but a second and equally important group of sources consists of books and articles published between 1918 and about 1924–1925, that is, from the first seven years of Communist rule; and a third important group of sources is the statements that were made by Lenin and other communist leaders at the time. Which is to say, virtually the whole truth about communism, and about its aims and its practices, was known over half a century before its collapse. So why did it take so long for the repudiation of communism to become a normal, uncontroversial feature of Western intellectual and political life?

One reason, surely, was virtue by association. Communism benefited enormously from its association with socialism, with which it was constantly compared and confused, although the latter, in its democratic variety, was an entirely different animal. The distinction was further blurred by the creation of the Popular Front as a counterweight to the rise of fascism. It was



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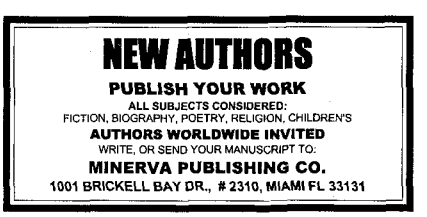
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then that French socialists coined the astonishingly long-lived slogan *pas d'ennemis à la gauche*, "no enemies on the left," which effectively disarmed many socialists who were opposed to communism. As late as the 1950s, Sartre was advocating silence about the Soviet labor camps "so as not to throw Billancourt [a working class suburb of Paris] into despair."

Then there was the blanket of censorship that covered the Soviet Union and other Communist countries, corners of which were selectively raised to show Potemkin villages to gullible foreigners. One effect of this censorship was to make the reports by refugees and defectors sound so fantastic that they were instantly disbelieved. Even figures such as Arthur Koestler and Arthur London encountered skepticism and outright disbelief in many quarters. But Werth and Margolin have no difficulty in showing how most of the accounts by fugitives from communism have been shown to be correct. It leaves the reader with a sickened feeling.

COMMUNIST CENSORSHIP at home was abetted by the achievements of Soviet propaganda and public relations—a success relatively little remarked upon by historians and political commentators. Western intellectuals (particularly in Europe) can be relied upon to respond, usually negatively, to the barrage of advertising and commercials routinely broadcast by capitalism, and to analyze their impact; but very little has been written, to my knowledge, about the success of communism's "commercials." The reason usually given is that they are so transparent and so seemingly mindless as to be not worthy of study, but surely this applies to most advertisements, too—and it doesn't seem to hamper their effectiveness, or to dissuade a critical spirit in the study of them.

These subjects are treated only glancingly in *The Black Book*, for not even 800 pages are enough to exhaust its study of repression and criminality; but they do go some way to explain the huge delay in the West's comprehension of the phenomenon of communism. Still, the largest obstacle to such an understanding is to be found not in political or social or intellectual history, but in the human psyche. The otherwise unaccountable popularity of Communist ideology may have been owed to its militant expression of some of our deepest hopes and our deepest fears. What Marx and his disciples promised was nothing less than an eschatological "leap from the kingdom of the necessity to the kingdom of freedom"—hence the special attractiveness of the promise not to the developed societies for which Marx predicted social revolution, but to backward and undeveloped societies, where the torments of "necessity" were greater, and the "wretched of the earth" longed for salvation. But it is not just backward societies that experience this longing. There is something in all of us that hopes for justice in this world, and for an end to inequality.

There are those who understand how to manage hope, by keeping it at arm's length and worrying about its abuse. (The fantasy of perfection in the next world is certainly less dangerous than the fantasy of perfection in this world.) But others have a harder time. Hope fills them with impatience, and with certainty; and it looks to them less like a dream and more like a plan. Communism addressed itself most successfully to the pawns of hope. And there still is a certain nostalgia, even among some Western intellectuals, for the confidence and the righteousness of the Communist way, and the "certainties" of Communist ideology, compared with the amoralities and the insecurities of a market-driven society and the ideology of Mammon. It is the requirement that they "shut the door on utopia," as Malia puts it, that holds so many back from a complete rejection of the outlook that issued in all these catastrophes.

In modern history, the politics of utopia have been largely the politics of the left. It is worth noting that the authors of *The Black Book of Communism* are liberals; liberals have always been utopia's most ardent adversaries. The renovation of the left in the West is certainly not a prominent theme of *The Black Book*, but I do not doubt that it is a part of the authors' great purpose. Arriving at a proper understanding of our century's disastrous entanglement in a criminal ideology, and atoning for the colossal cost in human lives and human misery (and for our complicity in it), is a more urgent task for the left than for the right. It is also an essential prerequisite for taking up anew, and with the proper anti-revolutionary modesty, the business of the betterment of the human condition. ■

Parables and Prizes

By JAMES WOOD

Disgrace
by J.M. Coetzee

(Viking, 220 pp., $23.95)

J. M. COETZEE'S distinguished novels feed on exclusion; they are intelligently starved. One always feels with this writer a zeal of omission. What his novels keep out may well be as important as what they keep in. And Coetzee's vision is impressively consistent: his books eschew loosened abundance for impacted allegory. *Waiting For The Barbarians*, his finest allegory, set in a nameless Empire with resemblances to turn-of-the-century South Africa, has an Orwellian power. Even when his novels are set in a recognizable and local South African world, as is the case with Coetzee's new novel, the dry seed of parable can always be felt underfoot, beneath the familiar surfaces of contemporary life.

But this is a harsh exchange. Coetzee's novels eschew society, and the examination of domestic filaments, for the study of political societies; they eschew the scrutiny of moral life for a more desperate search for ethical survival; they eschew metaphysics for politics; they eschew the description of human consciousness in its fullness and waywardness for the description of the consciousness of pain in its monotonous density. They avoid the warm flavors of the comic-ironic for the bitter concentrates of the allegorical-ironic. There is fantastic compulsion to Coetzee's lean, thrilling tales—they are always difficult to put down—but his novels are strangers to the patience of accumulation. His prose is precise, but not rare.

There are few writers in English who equal this South African writer's hard intelligence. Few are as philosophical, or as familiar with the languages and the modes of post-structural and post-colonial theory: Coetzee has taught literature for many years at the University of Cape Town, and is a formidable theorist of the novel and of the novel's destiny in his native country. And few writers are as bleak, as painfully, repetitively honest. Coetzee returns to the same pain as if a joint were being broken again and again in the same place.

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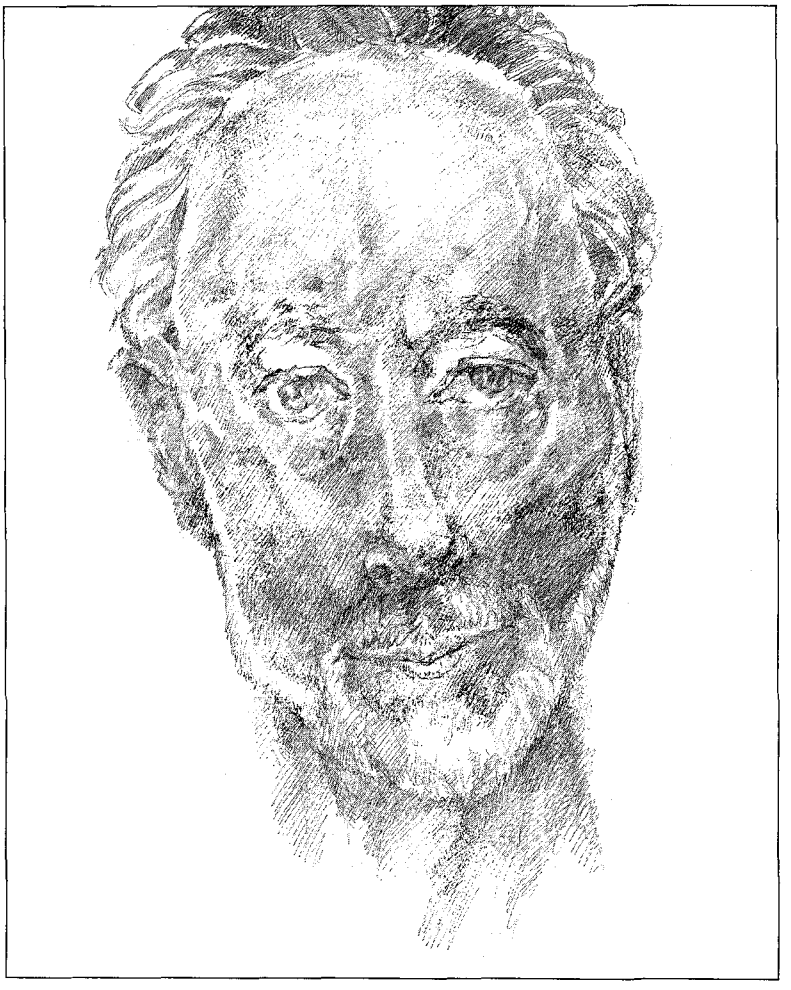
Still, what his books exclude almost constitutes life itself, and certainly constitutes much of the novel's traditionally victorious tourism of life. This seems a hard confinement, and it is something that Coetzee seemed to acknowledge, with characteristic probity, in his Jerusalem Prize speech in 1987. He claimed, perhaps too fatalistically, that South African literature was "a less than fully human literature, unnaturally preoccupied with power and the torsions of power, unable to move from elementary relations of contestation, domination, and subjugation ... it is exactly the kind of literature one would expect people to write from a prison."

But there is a puzzle. For this bleak writer has won a prize with every novel he has published. *Waiting For The Barbarians* has been reprinted twenty-two times since its publication in 1980. Coetzee is undoubtedly one of the best novelists at work in English, yet prize juries are known, more often than not, for their invincible wrong-headedness. Is it unexamined snobbery that provokes one to think that if Coetzee were a truly great, truly difficult writer—such as Beckett, whom he thinly resembles at times—he would not be so garlanded? It cannot be that Coetzee is merely giving people what they want; he is too good for that. Besides, as John Sutherland, one of the judges for this year's Booker Prize, wrote in *The Guardian*, none of the judges passionately loved his new novel, but all admired it very much, and disagreed least about its merits. (Coetzee is the only novelist to have won the Booker twice.)

But people like novels that, however intelligently, tell them what to think, that table ideas and issues—novels that are discussable. Above all, and most depressingly, people like allegory, and Coetzee's books always incline toward this mode. Coetzee is very subtle and refined, so that much of the time he does not really seem to be telling us what to think; better still, his novels self-consciously display an involvement in their own modes of presentation, so that Coetzee will often seem to be telling us what to think about being told what to think (which is still a species of telling people what to think, of course). *Disgrace*, which is a kind of South African version of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*—an issue novel about the generation wars—is a novel with which it is almost impossible to find fault. Precisely because he is a very good writer and not a great writer, Coetzee emits prize-pheromones.

These somewhat unfair thoughts are stirred by *Disgrace*, which is a very good novel, almost too good a novel. It knows its limits, and lives within a wary self-governance. It sometimes reads as if it were the winner of an exam whose challenge was to create the perfect specimen of a very good contemporary novel. It is truthful, spare, compelling, often moving, and thematically legible: that is to say, it does not overflow interpretation. It does not rise to greatness, in part because of a certain formal, cognitive, and linguistic neatness—almost a somber tidiness, if such a thing can be imagined—that is obscured, and almost successfully subjugated, by what is most powerful about the book, its loose wail of pain, its vigorous honesty.



J. M. Coetzee by David Schorr for The New Republic

David Lurie, through whom all of the novel's action is seen, is a professor at Cape Town Technical University. He feels himself to be something of an irrelevance, a traditional humanist with a love of the Romantic poets in a world of student illiteracy and snarling theory. He has been bumped from teaching literature to teaching "communications," which he despises. He is old-fashioned in another way, too: he likes to sleep with his female students. He begins a brief affair with one of them, a young woman named Melanie, and is more deeply drawn to her than he expected to be. The relationship is consensual, except that Lurie never really feels that Melanie's heart is in it.

Lurie is honest enough to sense an atmosphere of exploitation. In one of their sexual encounters, he has the uncomfortable sensation that he has forced himself upon his student: "she does not resist. All she does is avert herself; avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him." Lurie feels that this experience has been "not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core."

A complaint is made (probably not by Melanie but by her thuggish older boyfriend) and Lurie is told by an academic committee that he must apologize, and undergo counseling or some form of "sensitivity training." He admits his formal guilt, but he refuses counseling for something that seems natural to him, and even fine. Wearily stubborn, he loses his job rather than mimic a penitence that he does not feel, leaves the university in disgrace, and travels to the Eastern Cape to stay with his daughter Lucy, who lives alone on a smallholding.

Disgrace is written in a language that, even by Coetzee's standards, is savagely reduced. It never spills a drop, and is almost bloodless in its pale perfection. The reticent lyricism that sometimes overcame his earlier novels, like *Life & Times of Michael K*, is here abandoned. Scenes and characters are flicked with

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a word or two, and then dropped. The narrative is always restlessly propulsive. This, for instance, is how Lurie appraises Melanie's threatening boyfriend, and is the fullest visual description we are offered: "He is tall and wiry; he has a thin goatee and an ear-ring; he wears a black leather jacket and black leather trousers. He looks older than most students; he looks like trouble." And this is how Petrus, a black neighbor of Lucy's, is seen: "Petrus wipes his boots. They shake hands. A lined, weathered face; shrewd eyes. Forty? Forty-five?"

COETZEE IS ALWAYS praised for his dignified bleakness, for the "tautness" or carefulness or grim efficiency of his prose, which is certainly good enough to embarrass the superfluous acreage of supposedly richer stylists. But there is a point beyond which pressurized shorthand is no longer an enrichment but an impoverishment, and an unnatural containment. It is the point at which ellipsis becomes a formalism, a kind of aestheticism, in which fiction is no longer presenting complexity but is in fact converting complexity into its own too-certain language. Hemingway at his worst represents one extreme, as when the narrator of *A Farewell To Arms* sees his dead friend, and tells the reader, bathetically: "He looked very dead. It was raining. I had liked him as well as anyone I ever knew."

The effect of such writing, when passed through the jaded or cynical eyes of the protagonist, is a nullification of what is described. The language simply refuses to extend the consequences of its findings. Among contemporary writers, Robert Stone and Joan Didion straiten themselves in this way; and Coetzee does so, I think, in his new novel. Thus at the simplest level, no one is ever adequately described as simply "tall and wiry ... a thin goatee and an ear-ring ... black leather jacket." This is only the beginning of description, and a prose that treats it as finale is merely servicing its own requirements, rather as, when we find ourselves in a country whose language we barely know, we limit ourselves to what we know we can say, for self-protection.

At such moments, fiction is not open to reality. Instead it is efficiently reproducing its own fictive conventions. One of those conventions is precisely that characters, and characters' bodies, are swiftly describable. Another is that a character can quickly range over the memory of many years, and produce an instant summation. David Lurie is very much this kind of character; all his reflections and memories and thoughts are tightly marshalled in a spare line or two. When Lurie meets his ex-wife Rosalind, and they talk about his dismissal from the university, he recalls the early moments of their relationship:

> His best memories are still of their first months together: steamy summer nights in Durban, sheets damp with perspiration, Rosalind's long, pale body thrashing this way and that in the throes of a pleasure that was hard to tell from pain. Two sensualists: that was what held them together, while it lasted.

This passage would not be out of place in a mass-market thriller. It is the sheerest conventionality ("steamy summer nights ... body thrashing ... pleasure ... from pain"). No one thinks of an entire *marriage* in such neatly summary terms, except in novels, where men are strangely fond of this kind of thought, which exists in such novels as a code whose sole task is to announce, circularly enough: a man is now thinking about his failed marriage. (Particularly frustrating is that phrase "two sensualists," with its fraudulent confidence, and its calm speaking on behalf of both parties.) If such writing seems "efficient," the compliment should only be back-handed, since its efficiency is to save the novelist time, and the reader effort. It is cheap writing, literally cost-saving. It is like the moment at the beginning of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, when soldiers are seen slumbering, "dreaming of mothers and sweethearts." The point is to tell us: soldiers asleep. In the conventions of fiction, soldiers always dream about mothers and sweethearts.

IT MUST BE admitted, in fairness, that Coetzee is so agile and so intelligent that for every sentence that seems formulaic in his work, another springs out with life. And *Disgrace* is involved, as a theme, with its own verbal flatness. When Lurie and his daughter discover that they cannot communicate with each other, Lurie reflects that in South Africa language has become "tired, friable, eaten from the inside as if by termites. Only the monosyllables can still be relied on, and not even all of them. What is to be done? Nothing that he, the one-time teacher of communications, can see. Nothing short of starting all over again with the ABC." So some of the novel's linguistic scantiness can be laid at the door of David Lurie, who is disillusioned and cynical about language.

Yet a disillusioned and cynical consciousness is still a busy consciousness; it is one that is merely thriving on disillusionment and cynicism. The novelist's task is then to present in its fullness this sour mental prosperity. Coetzee fails, or refuses to do so, and he lets David Lurie's reduced language define David Lurie's inner life, which is to say that Lurie does not quite exist as an examined consciousness in this novel. He is an efficient flatness. Lurie—as the novel shows us—becomes an active *conscience*; but as a consciousness he is little more than a conduit for Coetzee's taut language, which makes Lurie too often merely the voyeur of his own weary clarities.

The effect is limiting, in ways that Coetzee did not perhaps intend, in ways that go beyond Lurie's own limitations. The novel always feels tightly poised, but never quite alive. Mental reflection is shunted into swift sidings; and characters speak in those one-line *fouettés* that are only ever used by people in movies or in Oscar Wilde:

> He makes love to her one more time ... It is good, as good as the first time; he is beginning to learn the way her boy moves. She is quick, and greedy for experience ... Who knows, he thinks: there might, despite all, be a future.
>
> 'Do you do this kind of thing often?' she ask afterwards.
>
> 'Do what?'
>
> 'Sleep with your students. Have you slept with Amanda?... Why did you get divorced?' she asks.
>
> 'I've been divorced twice. Married twice, divorced twice.'
>
> 'What happened to your first wife?'
>
> 'It's a long story. I'll tell you some other time.'
>
> 'Do you have pictures?'
>
> 'I don't collect pictures. I don't collect women.'
>
> 'Aren't you collecting me?'
>
> 'No, of course not.'

LURIE AND HIS daughter have never had a very easy relationship, despite his fierce love for her. He is conservative, solitary, she is lesbian, lefty, and also solitary, living alone on a small farm in a dangerous area among blacks and armed Afrikaners. Her best friend, Bev Shaw, runs an animal clinic, about which Lurie is initially dismissive. Father and daughter are brought together and further separated by a horrendous event: three men burgle Lucy's home, set fire to Lurie and lock him in a lavatory, and gang-rape Lucy. Coetzee describes this moment superbly. In particular, one admires the boldness with which he presents David Lurie's racist fear and sense of powerlessness (the assailants are black): "He speaks Italian, he speaks French, but French and Italian will not save him here in darkest Africa. He is helpless, an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped

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hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron. Mission work: what is left behind, that huge enterprise of upliftment? Nothing that he can see."

Thus begins the novel's second half, a gripping examination of the two different responses that two different generations fashion to this dreadful eruption. As in *Fathers and Sons*, the younger representative is more politically radical than the older; but the power of the novel is the way in which Lucy begins to change her father's vision, for Lurie ends the novel very much more thoughtful and penitent than he began it, shaken by his solitude, and shaken by Lucy's arguments. Though Lucy and her father do not quite agree by the novel's close, and in some sense they are as separated as they have ever been, both have been changed by the effort of reconciliation.

LUCY'S RESPONSE TO the rape, which her father finds bewildering, is to seek refuge in a damaged silence, and then in fatalism. She does not want to press charges, and refuses to move away from the area, in part because that will seem like a defeat, and in part because she begins to see the rape as the necessary price for her continued occupation of the land. The attack is a kind of historical reparation. "What if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on? Perhaps that is how they look at it; perhaps that is how I should look at it too. They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they are telling themselves." To which Lucy's father responds: "I am sure they tell themselves many things. It is in their interest to make up stories that justify them." Yet only a few minutes earlier in the conversation, David himself had raised the notion that the attack was not personal but historical: "It was history speaking through them... A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors."

But Lucy seems to share the self-justifications of her attackers, and when she discovers that she has been made pregnant by the attack she refuses to have an abortion. On the contrary, she expects to have the child, to raise it, and even to love it in time. Her father finds this grotesque, and accuses her of trying to "humble herself before history." He complains to Lucy's friend that "I don't know what the question is any more. Between Lucy's generation and mine a curtain seems to have fallen. I didn't even notice when it fell."

THE NOVEL IS interestingly divided on this rather shocking idea of rape as historical reparation, which, on the surface, is insulting both to its victims, who are seen to deserve it historically, and to its agents, who are no more than historically determined, and perhaps even racially determined ("It came down from the ancestors") to keep on exacting it. The possibility that the novel discusses and then finally proposes this vision has earned Coetzee a certain amount of covert condemnation.

But the book is more complicated than that. First of all, a society such as South Africa is riven by just this kind of liberal white fatalism, in which black violence is seen as a baleful inevitability, as nothing more than just deserts. It is honest of Coetzee to let his characters give expression to it, and the novel is alert both to the imprisonment that this thought represents, and to its subtle white racism, in which blacks are credited with no possible response other than the vengeful. In this sense, the novel discovers and dramatizes what unites David's and Lucy's different politics: both of them have depressingly low expectations for the future of South Africa, and both of them flatter themselves that whites will somehow have to act more "nobly" than blacks. Both espouse a kind of cynical "realism" that is in fact a variety of racist guilt. David thinks the historically determined criminals should be locked up with their own kind, and Lucy thinks that she should live penitentially among the historically determined criminals.

If both of them, at various moments, make black crime and white punishment seem inevitable, Coetzee seems to say, this only shows the unseemly imbrication of so-called conservative and liberal positions in South Africa. We should not be surprised that Coetzee's book develops this idea: in his novels and in his essays, from a staunchly liberal position himself, Coetzee has hammered on the way in which racism and conservatism have contaminated all political positions in South Africa, even their liberal inversions.

Still, David and Lucy do not simply "agree." Though David sometimes shares the idea of inevitability with his daughter, he does so to comfort her, having discovered what extremity of thought Lucy now finds consoling ("Think of it that way, if it helps"). David's occasional agreement is perhaps part his own fumbling, part his own inarticulacy in the face of the indescribable. Clearly, David is fundamentally opposed to his daughter's masochistic politics, and is only occasionally dragged towards his daughter's position by the

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awful victorious logic of her interpretation. It is Lucy who refuses to move, and David, who anyway has fewer "convictions" than his daughter, must mold himself around her, however awkwardly. Equally clearly, David's narrative function is dialogical: Coetzee has him in place to oppose and to qualify Lucy's dark temptations of thought, so that the novel is finally incapable of doing anything as monologic as "propose" a politics.

It is the *form* of *Disgrace*, not its content, that makes the reader uneasy. For the novel's shape does seem to insist on the necessity of Lucy's "punishment." It is a matter of symmetry. David has erred, committing a virtual rape against Melanie, and the novel's function is to wear down his complacent cynicism so that, in a late scene, he visits Melanie's parents and atones for his earlier involvement with their daughter. "In my own terms," he tells Melanie's father, "I am being punished for what happened between myself and your daughter . . . trying to accept disgrace as my state of being." This is David's "disgrace" and penitence. Lucy's "disgrace," of course, is not one that she earned or deserved; but in pairing the two forms of penitence, the novel comes unpleasantly close to suggesting a formal parallel of disgrace, in which both characters enact "necessary" falls.

This is a significant weakness, and it returns us to Coetzee's limitations, which are the limitations of allegory. *Disgrace* is so firmly plotted and shaped, so clearly blocked out, that it seems to request a kind of clarity of reading which is ultimately simplifying and harmful to the novel, in which "issues" are shared out between the generations, and split into willing binarisms: young and old, liberal and conservative, man and woman, straight and gay. Around this, the novel's architecture attempts to fuse these binarisms, by arguing for a kind of parallelism. It as if the form of the book tells us that despite the oppositions of Lucy and her father, both characters share more than they divide, for here are two people undergoing their different-but-similar forms of disgrace. And then, as a capstone, the novel's title powerfully extracts the essence of these two experiences, and unites them in one clipped word, and one strong theme: disgrace.

That these suspicions should arise has to do with Coetzee's fondness for intellectual and formal tidiness. Some will find this tension between the neatly allegorical and the complicatedly novelistic fruitful, and masterfully governed by Coetzee; but it is also possible to see it as a barely managed contradiction, in which the allegorical, alas, has pride of place in Coetzee's large quiver of talents. If the novel is finally more complicated than this, and more beneficially self-confounding, this is a tribute not only to Coetzee's difficult powers, but also to the very nature of novelistic narrative, which inherently tends towards the dramatic corrugation, rather than the thematic flattening, of ideas. ■

Assumptions

By Eugen Weber

Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age by Ruth Harris

(Viking, 474 pp., $34.95)

On February 11, 1858, Bernadette Soubirous, a fourteen-year old of Lourdes in the Pyrenees, was out gathering firewood for the family dinner when she saw the first of eighteen apparitions that would make her name and the name of her small town famous throughout the world. Rosary in hand, a beautiful smiling child in white beckoned from a niche in a rocky grotto across the stream where her companions hunted for driftwood. Though enjoined to stay away, Bernadette returned to the area known as Massabielle, and saw the child again, but she did not learn its identity and for weeks referred to it as "Aquéro," patois for "That," or an indefinable being.

At Aquéro's behest, she uncovered an underground spring and drank as she was told, and obeyed the girl's injunction to tell the priests to come in procession and build a chapel there. Then, on March 25, the day of the Annunciation, Bernadette heard the child declare that she was the Immaculate Conception (*Que soy era Immaculada Councepciou*). By then, news of Bernadette's visions had mobilized the population of Lourdes, and affected local authorities alarmed about public order and potentially subversive rumors. By mid-July, when Bernadette saw her white girl for the last time, access to the site had been temporarily closed. But locals had already built unauthorized shrines around it, erected home-made altars, and improvised processions. There would be no holding them back.

Eugen Weber is a professor of history at UCLA, and the author, most recently, of *Apocalypses: Prophesies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs Through The Ages* (Harvard University Press).

This is how Ruth Harris's marvelously engaging book begins, with the brief story of a poor, sickly mountain girl's encounter with the supernatural, on the outskirts of a small market town where life was toilsome and grim. Like Bernadette, whose vision considerately expressed herself in local patois because the girl knew no French, many Lourdais were illiterate; few used the national language or had much sense of being French. Life was a long struggle against scarcity and disease: *disettes* when food was short and dear recurred as normally as the seasons, and stunted, ill-conditioned recruits testified to their effects. But the mid-1850s witnessed a really serious crisis when grain prices soared higher than they had done in half a century, so that the poor, as Harris points out, would welcome a miraculous fountain that could ease their pain. The indigent and the ailing who had few therapeutic options relied on healers, witches, shepherds, blacksmiths, or bizarre poultices and spells. A healing spring in a miraculous grotto looked like a good deal. And the marginalization of these people, and their indifference to the nation-state, did not preclude an intense attachment to their locality, to the common land which included Massabielle, the site of the apparitions, let alone to a neighbor.

Simple and devout, Bernadette had never learnt the Catechism; she knew only Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Creed. But illiteracy did not impede the fervor of her prayers: "the rosary was her reading." But her piety did not satisfy skeptics who thought it ludicrous that the Virgin should appear to a poverty-stricken scrounger. "If God wanted to perform a miracle," commented a suspicious gendarme, "he would not use a little thief." Even the local nuns at first

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assumed that Bernadette was pulling a stunt appropriate to the Carnival season, which coincided with the first apparitions.

BUT SEMI-LITERATE societies can be sophisticated about spiritual and communal authenticity; and Bernadette's bearing persuaded friends, neighbors, and more critical observers too. She was sickly, tubercular, asthmatic, and her visionary ecstasies, on-lookers noted, were "a beautiful sight." The girl's worn, lice-ridden face became luminous, translucent—white, not livid—transported as "an angel at prayer." Perhaps that is the sort of testimony that one would expect. Yet tradition seemed to confirm the visionary, and to reinforce her message.

Caves such as the one at Massabielle carry chthonic overtones, and that is good for intellectuals to know; but in popular lore, however, they are associated with fairies—*petitos damizélas* like Bernadette's white girl—and also with divine visitations and with healing. Harris points out that Pyrenean grottoes long functioned as special havens for the Virgin and her family; and local legends could be invoked (and also invented) to ratify a welcome miracle. Lourdes sits amidst numerous shrines to the Virgin, scores within easy reach; and the white of Aquéro's garb, like the whiteness attributed to the ecstasies of a poor shepherd girl most likely of dark complexion, was a familiar attribute of high-born ladies, than which none could be higher than the Virgin.

But there was a detail of the revelation that proved less acceptable. Aquéro was not a lady, but a little girl (*uo petito damizélo*), far less grand than more dramatic traditional apparitions, who moreover usually spoke in French. Bernadette's vision was *sui generis*: petite, delicate, joyful, *bien micinonette*, and far from terrifying. Iconography would eventually turn the figure in Bernadette's illumination into an appropriately hieratic adult, and a conventionally maternal one.

Thus it was that, with the best intentions, orthodox Catholics filtered Bernadette's visions through the sieve of canonical imagination, iconographical tradition, theological authority. Far from simply unimaginative, they obeyed a political and theological imperative. For the apparitions significantly confirmed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception that Pope Pius IX had proclaimed a few years before. So Bernadette's adventure comforted a papacy beleaguered by liberals and democrats, rationalists and radicals, *and* a Catholic world being promised redemption in return for penitence.

Aquéro—better still, the *Immaculada Councepciou*—also encouraged the Lourdais who were keen to profit from their local rill as the poor of neighboring spas profited from their own mineral springs. The Pyrenean valleys are a nest of spas; but Harris's maps demonstrate that Lourdes also straddled some of the West's great pilgrim routes—to Rocamadour, to Compostella, to Montserrat. She also comments quite sensibly that spirituality mingles with commercialism at most pilgrimage sites. Without this conjunction, pilgrimages might be purer, but they would be duller, too. As it was, the development of Lourdes combined regional Marianism, local interests, and institutional re-Catholicization.

Different audiences were won over in different ways, and Harris is very good on the details. She connects Christian and pre-Christian rituals and expectations, local experience, beneficent miracles, demonic epidemics. She reminds us that for most rural populations *santé* (health) and *salut* (salvation) were one; and she could well add that, in an age of costly and ill-accessible medicine, the Church offered absolution and cure more cheaply than its secular rivals.

Above all, Harris places national and clerical personalities and politics in the context of small events and local concerns. Thus the local bishop, a pious Gascon much attached to Marian devotion, felt an instinctive veneration for an apparition that spoke in the tongue of the illiterate and the poor. That did not keep him from managing the opportune doings at Lourdes so as to promote his poor and distant diocese into one of the world's most famous. But it did not happen without a struggle.

Since the apparitions had been invisible and inaudible to all but the young shepherdess, no one could "prove" what, if anything, Bernadette had experienced. First locally, then nationally, this sparked strident debates and fierce polemics until, by the autumn of 1858, "few literate French had *not* heard of Lourdes." Then, in the 1860s, what Harris dubs the battle of the books began in earnest, with a majority of participants, whether triumphalist or skeptical, drawn from Catholic ranks and bent on demonstrating how ardently un-Christian ardent Catholics could be.

Meanwhile, Bernadette herself had to be dealt with. Modest, taciturn, generous, straightforward, she had been chosen by the Virgin, and through her the Virgin had favored the ignorant, poverty-stricken rural masses; but now her task was done. In 1860 she was bundled off to a local school of the Nevers sisters who taught her to read, to write, to sew, and generally domesticated her wildness. Structured and reshaped rather as her grotto was—enclosed behind an iron grille in 1864, paved over in 1866 to make room for a new altar—Bernadette was transferred to the convent at Nevers, where she died in 1878.

Harris's equitable account of the way Bernadette was treated (and often badgered) proves that stupidity brooks neither age nor creed. By the 1870s, however, Lourdes's fortunes were assured. They stemmed from Bernadette's visions, but were asserted in the 1860s to serve the Catholic Church and its theologico-political concerns; and then, beginning in the

COURTESY VIKING

Pilgrim invalids outside the basilica, Lourdes, circa 1900

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1870s, also as part of French political conflicts. Which is where the pilgrimages come in, and the Assumptionist order that spurred them.

In post-revolutionary France, a trickle of Marian apparitions through the mid-century was followed by a shower of miracles and prodigies in reaction to defeat and civil war in 1870-71. The drubbing by the Prussians reflected the wrath of God, the Paris Commune was a call to penance. That message was trumpeted from many a pulpit, and Assumptionists were among its most vociferous advocates. With the Second Empire swept away by defeat, the political shape of the country was up for grabs. We know that it settled into a republic; but that outcome was not obvious at the time, especially not to royalists and their papist allies, eager to restore the Christian monarchy of yore.

Rigorously spiritual, flamboyantly militaristic, as pious as they were patriotic, the Assumptionists were a Catholic Salvation Army marching off to war. Their politics, which joined spiritual and political preoccupations, were ultramontane, monarchist, and populist. They promoted charitable activities that expressed their vision of Catholic social solidarity. The network of their publications, including *Le Pélerin*, an illustrated bestselling weekly, and *La Croix*, the leading Catholic daily, both still doing well, served up a steady diet of fire, brimstone, and bile, venomously anti-Semitic, anti-Protestant, anti-republican, and eventually anti-Dreyfus.

Dedicated to the re-Christianization of a modern, too-modern world blemished by the doctrines of the Revolution, committed to the Virgin and to her Assumption, the order seized first on the idea and then on the dogma of Immaculate Conception, precisely because it defied nineteenth-century science and set Protestant and rationalist teeth on edge. And pilgrimage, as Harris observes, "was one of the greatest weapons in their re-Christianizing arsenal." Secular society was atomistic and hubristic. Pilgrimages would highlight its failings in the mirror of the Christian solidarity in which the rich served the poor. Their charity was more than good works or cash contributions: it was to touch and to console the most vulnerable. And Mary would serve as intermediary between God and his suffering people.

The national pilgrimages that Assumptionists launched, made possible by new rail networks (Lourdes got its line in 1866), the new mass circulation press, and new managerial techniques of hospital administration, brought hundreds of thousands to the shrine, thousands of them apparently sick beyond recovery yet braving the arduous journey, carried in wheelbarrows, on stretchers and railway trolleys, or on the backs of fathers, before comfortable handcarts came into use in the 1880s.

Competing with rival republican ceremonies and rituals in an age of mass politics, beating the left hollow at the game of turning out crowds, Assumptionists mobilized ever greater multitudes to support Marie against Marianne, and exploited religious pageantry in the service of the supernatural, and asserted the rights of God over the rights of man. They reasserted redemption through suffering and pain, but also the equality of all under the eyes of God. Their associated order, the Little Sisters of the Poor, lived from alms, tended the sick, shared the lives of the poor whom they helped, and evangelized by example.

Most interesting among the sick, however, were those whom science had failed and only God's miraculous assistance could help. So pilgrimage to Lourdes would emphasize divine order over worldly succor, and the shared endeavor of all Catholics. Enlisting women of high society "to carry stretchers like the merest working woman," and affirming the solidarity of the poor and weak served by the rich and strong, the Assumptionists cast their traditionalist message in populist, modernist, solidarist terms. And as the halt, the lame, the blind found cures—"veritable resurrections"—they managed to affirm the power of faith over the power of science at the very height of the Pasteurian revolution.

Capital of anachronism and superstition in the eyes of its secular enemies, of packaged piety and Catholic kitsch, Lourdes was also the epitome of the debate between science and religion, anti-clericalism and clericalism, positivist faith and miraculous lures. Harris leaves little doubt about which party in that great conflict was getting the better of it; and the city's transmutation confirms her impression. The chapel that Aquéro requested in 1858 was finished in 1872 and, in 1874, declared the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Towering over the once-modest shrine, it domesticated, romanticized, and uglified the original grotto of Massabielle. By the late 1870s, the Lourdes of the apparitions had been replaced by the Lourdes of pilgrimage: a prospering town of hotels, restaurants, bazaars, booths, and railway lines that J.-K. Huysmans disgustedly described as a "plethora of vulgarity" and a "hemorrhage of bad taste," explicable only by the underhand intervention of the Prince of Depravity.

But the Prince of Depravity may have had other fish to fry: notably, effecting a compromise between science and religion. For a long time, the accepted positivist stance was that saints, martyrs, and *miraculés* were neurotics. The Virgin's votaries meanwhile equated suffering with expiation, regarded illness as a kind of demonic possession, and cure as exorcism or expulsion of the evil. Then, in 1883, in what Harris dubs a Mephistophelean bargain, the Church established a Medical Bureau (*Bureau des constatations médicales*) for the scientific verification of alleged cures that would distinguish between the cure of "hysterical" ailments and "real, organic ones."

Members of the bureau had trained in the same medical schools and hospitals as their non-Catholic interlocutors, and Lourdes provided examples of healings that current medicine could neither explain nor dismiss. Secularists who came to see did not stay to pray, but they were puzzled by the therapeutic efficacy of the shrine, and realized the need to delve further into the nature of the miraculous. Exposure to the inexplicable shattered positivist self-assurance, so that even Professor Charcot, the grand panjandrum of the Salpetrière, published, in 1892, an article on "The Faith That Heals." No longer dismissing "cures" as frauds, Paris physicians began to discuss and to "explain" the shrine and its cures in relation to magnetism, hypnotism, spiritualism, mediumistic power, and the unconscious. Harris even quotes a certain Dr. Noriogof who explained the recoveries in terms of physiological magnetism and the "effluvia emanated by a multitude in a state of exaltation." Why not? Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd* had said as much.

One unalloyed rationalist hurrah came in 1893, with the publication of *Lourdes*, Emile Zola's attack on the entire phenomenon, which presented the healed as hysterics, the cures as ephemeral, and divine mercy as suggestion acting on the nervous disorders of women and young girls. No crude cynic, Zola understood the popular need for supernatural comfort, but not the limits of positive science, or even the conclusions that medicine had reached since the days of Claude Bernard. He preached to the converted. (But then only the converted heed preachers, whatever side they are on.) Miracles continued to be not proven; but even though critics justly denounced the shrine's unhygienic horrors, fewer pilgrims seem to have died there at the turn of the century than in the wards of Paris hospitals.

Perhaps the cured pilgrims were not hysterical. Perhaps they were simply reli-

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gious. They focused on physical and spiritual pain as a first step to healing, to *salut* and, in due course, to *santé*: sick bodies, desperate spirits, hoping for miracles and sometimes finding them, in a secular age. Meanwhile the persistent dolor of those who promoted and those who attended the pilgrimages looks much like a premonition of our own secular century's glorification of victimhood as prelude to "empowerment."

EMPOWERMENT WOULD BE a major feature of another premonitory aspect of Lourdes pilgrimages and Assumptionist activities that Harris emphasizes. The devotional display of nineteenth-century worship, the influx of women into religious orders, the overwhelming presence of women among Church personnel, educational and welfare workers: all this has been described as a feminization of religion. Women have played prominent roles as worshippers, witnesses, prophets, or seers in most ages and sects. They continued to do so in nineteenth-century France. The pilgrimage movement offered women rich opportunities for self-expression and affirmation, while cultivating their loyalties and energies. It also focused attention on women as active and valued participants in clerical enterprises.

The French, and French historians in their wake, have long reasoned that the attention lavished on women by the Church, and the increasing role of women in it, furnished arguments for keeping the sex disenfranchised, lest they should vote as their priests told them to vote. It is true that the Church provided a realm for "spiritual reflection and practical activism" that secular society could not match. Harris can find no sphere in the parallel universe of the republic in which women exercised such constant, institutionalized influence; and she suggests that this accounts not only for their being denied the vote, but for the frailty of French feminism. The Church was too effective in channeling women's energies and aspirations in directions outside the republican mainstream for many women, especially leading women, to look elsewhere.

A Christian activism heavily marked by female presence played a great part at Lourdes and throughout the land; and Assumptionists who played a large part in its vivification blended it with their own brand of pious populism. The Assumptionist press continued to spew venom against republicans, Masons, Jews, and assorted capitalist financiers. Its religious anti-Semitism (unregenerate Jews, refusing to convert, were delaying the Second Coming) blended with fin-de-siècle racism; and medieval tales of Jews bleeding Christian children to death (to make matzos for Passover) turned into metaphors of contemporary Jews bleeding the nation of its vitality, and of Jewish vampires (Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was published in 1897) poisoning its blood. All this culminated in the Dreyfus affair, in whose wake the overly strident and explosive order was expelled from France, and dissolved.

By then, Bernadette's innocent ecstasy before a muddy grotto had long been overwhelmed by its political and religious fallout, by its materialism and its monumentalization. Harris's book provides a worthy memorial of her experience and of its aftermath. It is informed, lucid, sympathetic, shrewd. Harris understands without judging, and her clear-eyed empathy provides believers with historical context, and non-believers with a strong sense of Lourdes's appeal. Consistent agnosticism such as Harris's does not come easily. But here she shows that it can pay off. ■

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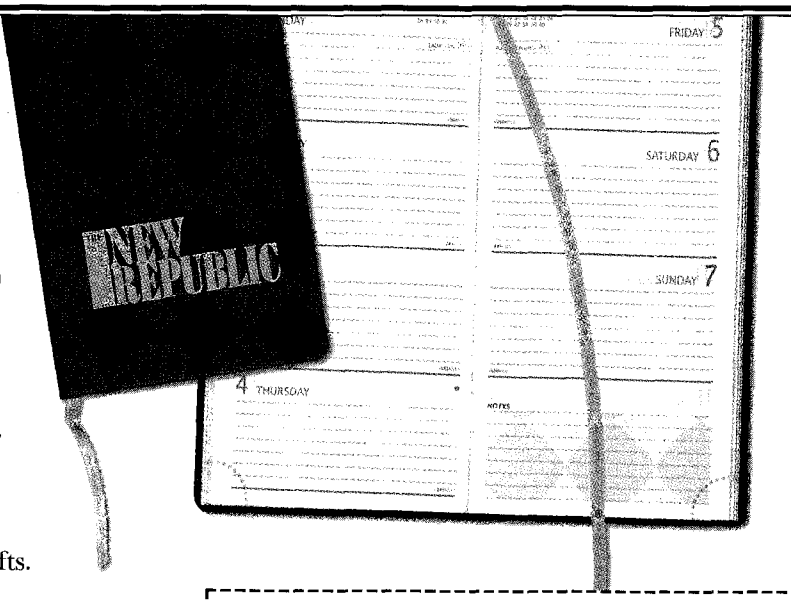

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Off Base

I HATE GEORGE WILL, BUT NOT for the usual reasons. My loathing has nothing to do with his politics or his windy punditry. I hate George Will because he is largely responsible for the single biggest con job in American sports: the belief that baseball is for intellectuals and football is for lugs. In his 1990 book of baseball agitprop, *Men at Work*, Will wrote that "[baseball fans] are spectators of a game that rewards, and thus elicits, a remarkable level of intelligence from those who compete. To be an intelligent fan is to participate in something. It is an activity, a form of appreciating that is good for the individual's soul, and hence for society." Will contends that baseball surpasses all other games in its mental demands. The double steal, the bunt, the hit-and-run—to hear Will tell it, these are hideously complex ideas that only the bravest dare contemplate. This view has been embraced by millions of Americans, most of whom seem to write for major magazines. At its core, baseball-as-Mensa is self-flattery: Because I comprehend baseball, it must be the true intellectual game.

THE WILL HOUSEHOLD NOTWITHstanding, Washington, D.C., is actually a football town. To our credit, Washingtonians have driven away two major-league baseball teams with our apathy. Some Washingtonians root for the Baltimore Orioles—I confess that I was once one of them—but that is a lightly-worn garment, tossed aside the minute the team tanks. The Washington Redskins, on the other hand, have sold out every game since before I was born and inspire peculiar passion. The most famous intersection of Washington and football occurred in 1971, when President Nixon designed a play for the Redskins to run in the play-offs. They ran the play, and it failed. If Nixon had chosen the vice president he had really wanted, the play surely would have worked. That's because, in 1968, Nixon considered picking Green Bay Packers Coach Vince Lombardi to be his running mate—till he discovered that Lombardi was a Democrat. (Think how history would have improved: "Nixon Resigns, Lombardi Inaugurated President.")

LOMBARDI'S ALMOST-CANDIDACY IS one of the delightful nuggets in David Maraniss's new Lombardi biography, *When Pride Still Mattered*. It's one of the very few good books about football. Even so, it illustrates why football fans have developed such an inferiority complex. *When Pride Still Mattered* subscribes to the "Cloud-Breath School" of football fandom. The Cloud-Breath School originated with NFL Films, the propaganda operation that produces all those luscious highlight reels and NFL specials. In NFL Films—which are narrated, incidentally, by God—every game is played in freezing rain, every coach thunders inspiration, every jersey is splattered with blood, and every labored breath emerges as a cloud. This, too, is the spirit of the Maraniss book, in which Lombardi's force of will alone turns his men into winners. The Cloud-Breath School fosters a beautiful ideal of football, and a simple one: great, big-hearted men clash blindly on the gridiron, marshaled by tough-as-nails generals.

IT'S ALSO HOOEY. FOOTBALL IS NOT A great game because it's simple but, rather, because it's complicated. In no game does strategy matter more. Baseball is physics for poets: a pitcher, a batter, and eight spectators. Football is physics for physicists. Twenty-two players move on every snap, each one of them integral to the action. This is the lesson of *Football Coaching Strategies*. I bought this book thinking it would make a nice remedial tutorial for somebody relatively fluent in the game, like myself. Then I opened to the chapter on the "Double Wing-T Package," an offensive scheme designed by University of Delaware Coach Harold "Tubby" Raymond:

> When running the trap option to this spread flank, the spread end's assignment is to crack on 4 if he is inverted, and if not, release outside and stalk No. 5. The wing's assignment begins with checking 4. If 4 rotates quickly and leaves the area that would allow the spread end to crack on him, the wing must block 4. If not, the wing will flare and stalk 5.

This passage was illustrated with some kind of inebriated hieroglyphic. An arrow shot out of a hollow circle, squiggles snaked out of a blackened circle, and a single square sat in the dead center, across from several, tiny V-shapes and dotted lines. Far off, in the upper left corner, a 4 and a 5 stood alone. As far as I could tell, the 4 and 5 were neither cracked nor stalked nor inverted. It was, in short, staggeringly incomprehensible—and this was a *basic* offensive set.

BASEBALL FANS ASSUME THEIR GAME is intellectually sophisticated because they can understand it. Football fans know their game is intellectually sophisticated because they can't. Football players, eternally caricatured as morons, think harder than any other pro athletes. They spend endless hours studying films, learning to read defenses, and agonizing over strategic decisions. Should linemen plant themselves 30 inches apart? Or 36 inches? Or 40 inches? Defensive coaches endlessly debate how to ensure a seven- to six-man advantage against a running attack. Baseball has remained essentially the same game for a century. It is feudal agrarianism, static and peaceful. Football is the Internet economy—endlessly innovative and disruptive. Football coaches, unlike baseball coaches, routinely revolutionize the game with new strategies. The Chicago Bears' "46" defense ate up the NFL for five years until offensive coaches figured out how to neutralize it. "Air Coryell," the passing attack designed by San Diego Chargers Coach Don Coryell, flummoxed defenses for nearly a decade. These days, NFL offenses are still trying to solve the zone blitz. The answers are there, somewhere in the circles and squiggly lines.

FOOTBALL SHOULDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE between the Cloud-Breath School and *Football Coaching Strategies*. It can explain itself to its fans. In the finest passage in *When Pride Still Mattered*, Maraniss describes Lombardi's famous sweep, the play that defined his Packers. Maraniss details the duties of each offensive player. Here, for example, is part of the description of right tackle Forrest Gregg's responsibilities: "From a three-point stance, Gregg drove into the end with his forearm or shoulder, a quick blow intended to set up the defender for a follow-up block, a cut below the knees delivered by the fullback.... After slamming the defensive end, the right tackle sought out the middle linebacker and tried to seal him off from the flow of the play." And so on for ten more players and 500 more words, until I understood exactly why it worked. Lombardi, Maraniss writes, once lectured on the sweep for eight consecutive hours.

IF NOTHING ELSE, ALL THIS FOOTBALL study offers a fresh perspective on the presidential campaign. Enough with the talk about Bill Bradley's basketball career. We're missing the real sports lesson of the race. George W. Bush played baseball in high school; Al Gore played football. I know how I'm voting.

DAVID PLOTZ

DAVID PLOTZ is Washington bureau chief of *Slate* magazine.

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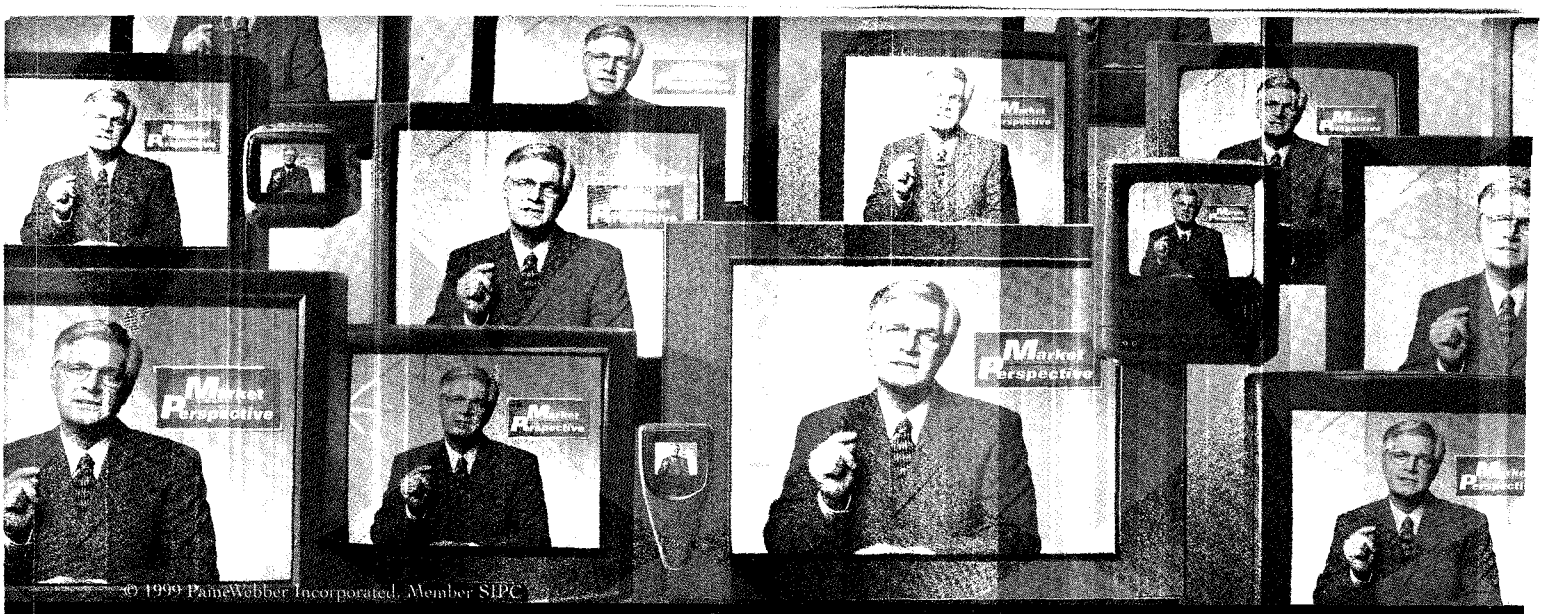

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